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THE RIGHT PRINCESS

CLARA LOUISE BURNHAM

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1903.

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The Right Princess

BY

Clara Louise Burnham

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY
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1903

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To

M. B. C.

THIS STORY IS AFFECTIONATELY AND
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THE RIGHT PRINCESS

CHAPTER I

AT WATERVIEW

"On a morning like this it looks quite like England, Maurice, does n't it?" asked Miss Hereford wistfully.

"The spring makes you homesick, Aunt Eleanor," remarked the deep, pleasant voice of the man standing beside her in the broad window.

They were looking through heavy plate glass upon long stretches of tree-shaded sward surrounding a spacious country house on Long Island. Through fresh vistas of leaves new born they caught the sparkle of the blue waters of the Sound, and even through windows closed against the bracing breezes of early day, the fluting of the thrushes reached their ears.

"But I 'm *not* homesick, Maurice," returned the lady decidedly. "When I made up my mind to come out, it was settled. If you could make a noble sacrifice, why, so could I."

The other smiled, revealing teeth long, white, and firm, that suited his slender, strong physique,

lithe as a boy's now that he was in his thirty-sixth year.

"If it is a mark of nobility to come to the States, I should be an exalted character," he returned. "I certainly began early."

Miss Hereford nodded her head. "To be a cowboy on your own ranch was only a bit of fun once in a way. That was quite different to this, Maurice."

"My own ranch — that 's good!"

"Why, you own it with Lord Lenox, I 'm sure."

"Yes, about as much of it as would hold the Hotel Majestic. What should a pauper like me be doing with a ranch?"

Miss Hereford's gentle eyes met his quizzical ones with a grateful glance. "You were very good to bring us away from that hotel," she said, his words suggesting a new train of thought. "I 'm afraid you 'll be bored here, Maurice."

"And so will you, Aunt Eleanor; and so were you at the Majestic. We change the place and keep the pain, eh?"

"Yes, that 's it, that 's it," she sighed in assent. "Central Park was very nice to walk in, and Billy liked the squirrels. I 'm not sure," anxiously, "that Billy won't miss the squirrels; but on the whole this is much better, much better, — so much room and such privacy. Ah, the privacy!" She drew a deep breath of relief. "People did n't seem to do him any good, did they, Maurice?" she went on. "We tried it faithfully, did n't we?"

Her companion nodded. He began unconsciously drumming on the window, and a sombre look overspread his high-bred face. "We 'll round off the year, Aunt Eleanor. The doctor will be satisfied with that, I suppose, and Edward — does n't care."

At the quiet bitterness of the last two words, Miss Hereford winced. "I know my brother ought to be here," she said deprecatingly, "but I try to fill his place."

"You more than fill it. You 're worth a dozen of him."

The curt reply did not seem to be reassuring. Miss Hereford wiped her eyes openly.

"Not a tear!" said the other, without looking at her; "not one! It is n't worth it. Brace up, little woman."

"But I should defend the absent, Maurice."

"That would be a big contract, — as we say in America. Come now, Aunt Eleanor; I have n't said very much about Billy's father since we came over last autumn, have I?"

"Indeed, you have not," returned Miss Hereford warmly, "and I feel as deeply as you can that he should be standing where you are this minute. Edward is selfish; he is indifferent, and I don't know why you are so good — indeed, I don't." The handkerchief again came in use.

"A case of necessity, that's all," returned the other, resuming his ordinary manner. "I 'm doing for my sweet sister what you are doing for your brother. I could n't face her in that world where she is — if I 'm ever lucky enough to come

near her — unless I stuck by her boy. Lucky for me, you are just you, and not some possible she who would have made the situation unbearable."

"There are some people you would n't have asked to call 'Aunt,' I 'm sure, Maurice," responded Miss Hereford, smoothing her little lace head-dress with a comforted and comforting touch.

Maurice Burling continued to gaze reflectively before him. Only yesterday he had received a letter from London bringing disheartening tales of his brother-in-law's manner of living. The inroads made on the family fortune had already been considerable, and he knew they were being increased to a damaging extent.

"One thing must be said for Edward," ventured Miss Hereford, her tender heart still yearning over the younger brother whom she had mothered before Maurice was born: "he is always most generous in all our arrangements."

Her companion uttered an inarticulate sound of assent and smiled. "Oh, Edward is always lavish in his arrangements," he agreed. "The upshot of it may be that you and I shall have to take care of Billy one of these days."

"Now, Maurice, you certainly are unjust to my brother."

"I hope so. It won't make much difference to Billy," added Burling, with a sigh: "purple and fine linen and ancestral halls on the one hand, or on the other a collarless life on the ranch. It would be all one to him."

"And have you thought" — Miss Here[illegible]d's

voice trembled and she hesitated; then, to her companion's amazement and concern, she stopped short and, clasping her little hands on his arm, buried her face in the unsympathetic harshness of his coat-sleeve and burst into tears.

"What is it, Aunt Eleanor? What is it?"

"His birthday — Billy's birthday," she sobbed. "It 's to-morrow. The poor child will be of age. Think what it would be, — what it ought to be: the rejoicing — the celebration. And here we are alone — on an island — his father across the seas — and his mother dead — and nobody to know — or care — not even B-B-Billy!"

The climax of this speech was followed by a paroxysm of weeping, during which the young man placed an arm around the convulsed figure, a lump rising in his own throat as he gazed down on the lace head-dress.

"We have it to bear, Aunt Eleanor, we have it to bear," was his low response; and the pressure of his arm was loving.

"And his father taking to bad courses — quite bad, for I know he is!" wept the poor little woman, her defenses entirely broken down. "I know much more than you think, Maurice — and the doctor giving us this hope that the voyage and change might help Billy, and it has n't at all — and that hotel all the long winter was so strange, though the lift was very smooth and quick, I must say, and they were so attentive to Billy" —

"Shall we go back, Aunt Eleanor? Do you wish to go home? It is for you to say." Burling

spoke quietly, and without impatience. He suddenly realized as never before the strain involved to his companion in the mere unaccustomedness of her environment.

"The doctor said a year," returned Miss Hereford, struggling to be calm.

"Eight months of the year are gone. I see no vestige of improvement, do you?"

"None — none; but," releasing her companion and turning her reddened eyes from him, "but we 'd best round out the year as you said, especially now you have taken this house for the season. I 'm sure it 's most ungrateful of me, and silly to make such an exhibition; but I woke early this morning thinking of Billy's birthday, and your poor sister, and how glad we should be that she is spared this long heartbreak. Sometimes the evil one possesses me with a horror lest the dear boy outlive us. Nothing," the little woman shuddered, "nothing drives me so nearly frantic as the thought of Billy being dependent on hirelings."

"What a long way around you go to borrow trouble!" said Burling.

"No, not a long way. Your life and mine are all that stand between the child and that. Edward would n't" — Whatever the speaker had been about to declare, her kind heart refused to put into words. "It is only an automaton, a machine like Sanders, who has no repulsion or fear of Billy. Nothing else has driven away both those housekeepers. One of them said his eyes haunted her,

and the other said she dreamed of him. Only fancy! Neither of them stayed more than a week, and I don't know what I 'm to do. One must have a housekeeper in this strange country, surely; but," recurring to her tender apprehensions, "supposing such creatures were all Billy had to look after him!"

"That problem is n't imminent, Aunt Eleanor, but this trouble about housekeepers is. Afraid of Billy, eh? You did n't tell me that before."

"Yes, it was mostly that, and partly, I must say, it 's Dudley's fault. She can't abide the ways of Americans, and she gave great offense to the last one."

"She did, eh? Why don't you send her packing? She must n't embarrass your plans."

"Dudley — packing? Dudley — here?" The gentle voice took a tone of amazement. "Whatever would the poor creature do, astray in a strange land, and whatever should I do with some barbarian in her place? I 've talked to her — I have, indeed; I dare n't let her go near the other servants, and there 's another housekeeper coming to see me to-day. I picked out her letter as the most promising of those who answered the advertisement, and I do — oh, how I do hope she 'll answer!"

A soft sound behind them caused Burling to turn, as Dudley the maid approached, a small silk shawl in her hand.

"You 'll be wanting this, I should think, Miss Hereford," she said. "It is chilly this morning."

Burling fixed his eyes upon the newcomer, half frowning.

"Dudley, a new housekeeper is to arrive to-day," he announced.

"Yes, sir," responded the woman, whose pursed lips seemed to suggest the repression of sentiments concerning a country where a new housekeeper was a possibility.

"See that you do all that you can to make it agreeable for her, providing your mistress accepts her services. It is very embarrassing for Miss Hereford to be obliged to give orders to strange servants. The housekeeper is to relieve her of much annoyance."

"The sillies are afraid of Mr. William, sir," remarked Dudley with pert contempt.

"Very well. See that they need not be afraid of you as well." The woman was curtsying and departing when he added, "And, Dudley."

"Yes, sir."

"I'm afraid you don't altogether understand that you are now in a land where everybody is as good as everybody else."

The maid knew the quizzical light in the eyes bent upon her.

"Quite so, Mr. Burling," she answered scornfully.

"Yes; but you must remember that they are sometimes better than anybody else. Be quite prepared to find the new housekeeper better than anybody else. You understand? Then a sweet American peace will reign over this household."

"And I shan't have to understand the money," said Miss Hereford, sighing. "Oh, I do hope she'll do!"

"I rely upon you, Dudley," said Burling impressively. And the maid, biting her lip, her eyes falling under his admonitory look, curtsied once more and departed.

CHAPTER II

THE HOUSEKEEPER

WHEN Miss Miranda Graves took the train at Long Island City for the exclusive and fashionable resort whither she had been summoned, she could not have told whether or no she hoped that her errand would be successful. Her strongly marked features would never give an impression of indecision. They were set now in more than their usual severity of outline; and yet the thoughts under the new straw bonnet, black as her hair, were contradictory.

She had spent the winter with a relative in Morristown, and having no especial plan for the summer, it was like her thrift, when she saw Miss Hereford's advertisement, to have a look at the situation before returning to her home in Massachusetts. Miss Miranda would never experience any loss in life from failure to seize an opportunity.

But there were circumstances to be considered, and she considered them now while the train sped on; and the expression on her clear-cut profile, could the black bonnet have changed into a three-cornered hat, would have made striking her resemblance to her Revolutionary forefather.

There was Frances, for instance. It was quite possible that she owed something to Frances, who had no relative in the world so near as herself. They had not met for a year, and as the niece had been engrossed in study and Miss Graves never wrote a letter which conscience did not dictate, their communication had been rare.

Her thoughts dwelt long on Frances now. She had for years been looking forward to a time when she might see more of this niece; but business first and pleasure afterward had had to be her motto. Miss Miranda felt that the over-conscientious young girl had been inclined to take life too seriously; and while under the circumstances this trait was a safeguard, she longed for a day to come when she might give Frances "a real good time." Was it right now to pin herself down to another three months' absence from her? The question was still an open one in Miss Graves's thought when the train drew up at her station.

"There are pros and there are cons," she said to herself as she left her seat.

A month later this spot would at train-time be a nucleus for sleek-coated bobtailed horses and smart equipages, but to-day only two carriages were waiting, and into one of these Miss Graves was ushered by a waiting groom. There was no evidence in her unsmiling countenance of the impression made upon her by the elegance of the high cart.

A swift drive of twenty minutes through the charming spring landscape followed, and the new-

comer suspended her mental speculations to concentrate her attention on the action of the horse, whose spirit and strength would be counted among the cons when Miss Miranda should have leisure to renew her ruminations.

It seemed hours to her before they entered the driveway winding toward the low, rambling house, which aped expensively the simplicity of a bygone century; but at last Miss Graves found herself alone in a small room whose windows commanded a fine view. She regarded her surroundings as one in a dream, her head being still somewhat giddy from the excitement and apprehensions of the drive.

"There are pros and there are cons," she said to herself again mechanically, and then became conscious of a jingling of bells and the entrance of a small woman in a lavender gown and a lace head-dress, preceded by a small pug dog, who sniffed at the stranger inquisitively.

"This is Miss Graves?"

Miranda instantly stood up, and made a movement to shake hands; but the action was so characteristically stiff and cautious, and such a greeting was so remote from Miss Hereford's thought, that the latter did not observe it. So Miranda resumed her seat, her sub-conscious mind adding another to her list of cons.

But Miss Hereford's mental attitude was eager and wistful, although she was not attracted by the stolid, non-committal face of the stranger.

"I'm sure she's part Indian. That nose!"

thought the English lady, with a fluttering heart. She had so disliked the letters of all the other applicants! She did so hope this one would do!

"I am a — a stranger in America," she said with dignity. "We have recently taken this house, and I wish a competent — a competent" —

Miss Miranda saw the hesitation.

"Of course you do. I see you 've got a big establishment on your hands," she returned.

Miss Hereford glanced at the speaker quickly.

"We have been here but a few weeks," she went on, "and I have already had two persons" — she hesitated again.

Miranda Graves was accustomed to taking care of people. She saw the trouble in the questioning, doubtful glances that were meeting her steady eyes.

"Why, you 've had bad luck, have n't you?" she remarked kindly.

Whatever sensations the fraternal tone may have caused her hostess, the latter made no sign. They regarded each other in silence for a moment.

"Of course, if I 'm really needed," reflected Miss Graves, "that 's a pro."

"I should expect you to give orders to the servants and keep the accounts. I suppose you are familiar with the ordinary duties."

"It 's a real pretty way she has of talking," thought Miranda. "I guess she 's English."

"Yes," she said aloud, "if I take the place I guess I can do everything you want me to. I 've got a good eye for dust and a good hand for cook-

ing, and if the girls don't do things right I know how to make 'em."

"Then in that case you 'd best come at once," said Miss Hereford earnestly.

"What ailed the other housekeepers you had?" asked Miss Miranda cautiously.

"What — what?" inquired Miss Hereford.

"Yes. Why did they leave? You know, I might not be able to fill the place either."

"I was going to tell you," said Miss Hereford nervously. "We have an — an invalid in the family. It is for his sake that we have come to this quiet spot. He — the other women — he — they were foolishly nervous" —

The speaker seemed uncertain how to proceed, and Miss Miranda helped her out with a sort of sonorous gentleness.

"Has fits, has he?"

Miss Hereford started and colored with momentary indignation.

"No, my nephew does not have fits."

"Well, if it 's only waiting on him, I ain't afraid of sick folks."

"He does not require waiting on except by his man; but he is not confined to the bed, and he is peculiarly depressed, and if one is fanciful" —

Miss Graves smiled for the first time as the speaker paused.

"I ain't fanciful, Miss Hereford. You must have got hold of a couple of weak sisters."

The Englishwoman liked her applicant's face at this moment.

"I guess you 've done well to come down here," went on Miranda pleasantly. "This is a place to cheer your invalid up, surely."

"Poor child! I hope it may!" broke sadly from Miss Hereford.

"A child, too! I wonder where she picked up the soft-heads," thought Miss Graves. "I guess there must have been something else, and they made that an excuse. I wonder what I 'll run up against if I come. It 's a place where money 's no object, that 's plain."

At this juncture a man entered the room. He was dressed in black and had small side whiskers. As Miss Hereford turned he spoke.

"Excuse me, mum, but I think Mr. William's beads are 'ere, mum."

He crossed softly to a table, and taking there-from a box of many colored glass beads which had already attracted Miss Miranda's attention, he disappeared.

"I should think you are the right person for me," said Miss Hereford, who had been becoming more impressed each moment with a belief in Miranda's capability. "I wrote you the terms."

"Yes, and they are perfectly satisfactory, Miss Hereford; but I 'm in a kind of a quandary myself. I could n't come for a week, anyway."

"I would wait a week."

"With me, home 's where the trunk is."

The Englishwoman shuddered at the awful sentiment.

"It 's had to be so of late years, but still I 've got a headquarters in Melrose."

Miss Hereford's eyebrows went up. The word had a winningly familiar sound.

"It 's near Boston. Perhaps you don't know; and I 've got a niece there that I have n't seen in a year. She 's my sister's child, and she 's an orphan, and she 's graduating from Normal this year, and I don't know what her plans are. If I find she 's fixed all right for the summer, why, I 'll come just as quick as I can get ready; but if I find Frances has counted on me, I feel as if I ought to stay by her for the present."

It was all very extraordinary to Miss Hereford, — the sonorous voice, the independence of manner connected with candid kindness.

Again a bird-like indignation uprose that this capable person should propose slipping away from her and her needs.

"If I don't come, I 'll refund the money for this trip, Miss Hereford, and I 'll try to find you somebody else, too, if you 'd like to have me."

Miss Graves's tall person towered above the English lady as she rose, and Miss Hereford looked up at her in desperation.

"This niece — does she wish to go out to service?"

The expression which flashed over Miranda's countenance reminded Miss Hereford suddenly of Maurice's admonition to Dudley. Before her hesitating tongue could frame a mollifying word, Miss Graves's face had resumed its usual immobility and she spoke quietly.

"Frances calculates to be a teacher. She 's

been to Boston to school all winter." There was an unconscious emphasis on the word "Boston." How astonished she would have been to realize that it meant no more to the Englishwoman than if she had said that her niece attended school at Dobb's Corners!

"That 's very nice, I dare say," observed Miss Hereford, vague about everything except the clear desire to propitiate this tower of strength who understood American servants. "Then she has her summer free, I suppose. Could n't she visit you here, perhaps?"

Miss Miranda stared in astonishment. "I had n't thought of such a thing as that," she said.

"There 'd be plenty of room with you, I should think, and she can visit you if you like."

"I must say that 's very kind," said Miranda heartily. "I 'll talk it over with my niece."

"Then in a week at the outside I may expect you," said Miss Hereford nervously, "and meantime let me have your address."

It occurred to her that if Dudley continued to make herself unpopular in the servants' quarters there might be necessity for Miss Graves to bring new ones with her when she came. She would know where and how to find them, — thought pregnant with relief!

"I 've brought references from some folks in New York," said Miranda, handing Miss Hereford some papers which the latter received absently.

"I will have my maid show you your rooms."

The speaker rang as she spoke, and Dudley appeared, her chin discreetly raised.

"Show Mrs. Graves the housekeeper's rooms, Dudley."

"Miss Graves," corrected Miranda imperturbably.

"Quite so," said Miss Hereford. "Follow Dudley, if you please. One moment, Mrs. Graves," with sudden, desperate determination. The little woman felt she must ask it or she should not sleep to-night. "Would you mind — could you tell me — are you — in fact — are you part Indian?"

"Part what?" asked Miranda, distrusting her usually reliable ears.

"Part — Indian?" repeated the other tremulously. From Miranda's expression she suspected she might have roused the ancestral savage in her breast, and she quaked until reassured by the broad smile that suddenly overspread her housekeeper's countenance.

"Law — no!" replied Miss Miranda heartily, "not unless my forefathers met some of 'em in your country before they took to the Mayflower."

"Oh, they could n't have, you know. We 've none of them," said Miss Hereford earnestly, while Dudley's nostrils dilated and her chin tilted a fraction more. "Thank you, Mrs. Graves. That 's quite satisfactory."

"Miss," said Miranda.

"Quite so; and, Dudley, bring Mrs. Graves back again after she has seen the rooms."

When finally all preliminaries were arranged,

the trap with its fiery steed reappeared to take the new housekeeper to the station. As Miranda crossed a piazza to enter it, she passed a tall man whose athletic build impressed her. As she approached he turned his head and regarded her listlessly with brown eyes whose beauty diverted her for a moment from fear of the horse. Near by lingered the servant who had asked for the beads.

"Young nabob," she thought. "All your money has n't taught you to be civil or you would n't stare in that supercilious way. Maybe he thinks I 'm an Indian too," thought Miss Graves; but her smile was quenched as the horse sprang forward and she clutched the side of the seat.

CHAPTER III

FRANCES ROGERS

WHEN Miranda reached Melrose she went directly to the room which for several years had been her headquarters when some labor of love or business did not preoccupy her elsewhere.

The boarding-place of her niece was not far distant; but true to her rule of making business come before pleasure, she wished to dispose of her baggage and report to her landlady, a friend of her youth, before she relaxed to the interview with Frances for which she longed.

"I have n't even told her I 'm coming," she remarked to her hostess, who occupied the lid of one trunk while Miranda knelt before another and unpacked it. "I thought I 'd surprise her."

"I guess you 'll find her changed some," said Mrs. Smith, smoothing her gray hair and swinging her feet in a luxury of unaccustomed idleness.

"Should n't wonder if I did, some; but then, Frances always did have an old head on young shoulders. She won't seem as different as a good many girls would. I expect there 's a lot of folks think I ought to have stayed by and mothered her more than I have; but I knew Frances, and I knew the Peabodys were real kind to her, and,

truth is, I have n't got the means to be idle, — though that 's nobody's business but my own."

"Oh, yes," returned Mrs. Smith; "Mrs. Peabody just swears by Frances. Welcomed her back from Boston like her own daughter; and everybody knows Jim Peabody 's just hankerin' to be kind to her all his life."

Miss Graves paused in the act of shaking out a flannel skirt.

"Jim Peabody? I want to know!"

"Yes, indeed; and he ain't the only one, either," said Mrs. Smith knowingly. "Frances has been getting to be quite a belle while you 've been skipping all over creation."

"Frances a belle? Go 'way!" returned Miranda, drawing down the corners of her lips in endeavors to conceal her pleasure. "Frances is nice looking, I think myself; real fair complected instead of black as an Indian, like her mother and me." A memory caused the speaker to chuckle into the depths of the trunk. "But I guess she won't ever be hung for her beauty," she added, as she reappeared.

"You have n't seen her. She 's blossomed out, I tell you," persisted Mrs. Smith.

"So much the better," returned Miranda, unfolding a shirt waist and wondering if the last year's sleeves would scandalize Long Island. "I shall be glad if she don't have to be a schoolma'am all her life. There *is* one man here and there who would be better than that fate."

"Jim Peabody 's a good boy," remarked Mrs. Smith tentatively.

"Squints, don't he?"

"Not every way you look at him. Sometimes his eye 's real straight."

"Then it depends on how Frances looks at him, don't it?" returned Miranda dryly. "It nearly always comes to that in the end."

"Tom Bowers is crazy about her, too."

"She might have *him*. Then her normal course would n't be wasted. He needs to be taught a little something as badly as anybody I know."

"Tom 's as steady as a church," went on Mrs. Smith. "If I was you, Miranda Graves, I would n't discourage Frances about either of 'em. Their folks are professors, all of 'em, and they 're as well off as the average."

Miss Miranda's eyes twinkled. "I did n't know as you was such a matchmaker, Lucy. Which one do you favor?"

Mrs. Smith met her friend's merry glance with cheerful defiance.

"The same one Frances does," she rejoined smartly.

"Which one 's that?"

"It would take a Philadelphia lawyer to find out — or else you, Miranda. Perhaps you can."

"Well, I shan't be sorry," Miss Graves spoke leniently, "if anybody 's made Frances believe that all work and no play is n't good for anybody. I was always sorry for the child that she was made up the way she was, takes everything so hard."

"She does n't seem to any more," said Mrs. Smith.

"Well, I 'm glad. She 's healthy enough naturally, but she used to worry herself into a headache over mere trifles. How have her headaches been lately?"

"I have n't heard her complain. Of course I don't see her often, but when I do, she seems as gay as a lark."

"Frances gay as a lark! Well, well!" remarked Miss Graves. "I never expected to hear anybody say that."

"Then there are things for you to find out about your own relations. Going to stay with us now awhile? I do hope you are."

"Can't." Miss Graves shook her head. "Just wait till I 'm independently wealthy. Then you 'll know where to put your finger on me."

There was a slight admixture of awe in Mrs. Smith's regard for her girlhood friend. Experience had taught her that it was not best to question Miranda too closely.

"Well, all is, I 'm sorry," she returned after a pause; and Miranda, recognizing her curiosity and approving her reticence, rewarded her.

"I 've taken a job down Long Island way for the summer. Going to keep house for some folks."

"I must say you 've got a knack for finding work whenever you want it, Miranda," remarked the other admiringly. "I only wish you 'd stay in this part of the country long enough so 's your friends could keep acquainted with you. What 's Frances going to do with herself this summer?"

"That 's one of the things I 'm going to find out."

Miss Graves finally locked the door of her room behind her and hastened her steps in the direction of the Peabody homestead. Fat, motherly Mrs. Peabody herself came to the door in answer to her summons, and threw up both hands in pleasure at the unexpected apparition.

Instantly Miranda's gloved finger flew to her lip. "Hush!" she said. "I want to surprise Frances. Is she in her room? I 'll see you when I come down."

So with smiling pantomime they parted, and Miss Graves went as lightly as might be up the steep old-fashioned staircase and took her way toward a bedroom whose door stood ajar. Her movement in slipping in did not disturb a girl who sat in a low rocking-chair reading, her back toward the entrance.

The sun shining full on her luxuriant light brown hair made a sort of aureole around the young head, and Miss Miranda smiled to see the absorption betrayed in her attitude. "I 'll catch her," she thought mischievously. "She 's got hold of something exciting, I know. That ain't any arithmetic."

She tiptoed forward with successful caution until she stood over the girl, and her eager eyes sought the title of the book with intent to tease the embryo teacher.

A sudden change overspread the visitor's face as she recognized the volume, and she suddenly placed her hand on the girl's shoulder.

Frances turned, and a glad light flashed in her

eyes. She placed the book on the table and sprang up. "Aunt Mira — why, Aunt Mira!" she exclaimed, clasping Miss Graves in her arms.

"Dear me, Frances," said the latter anxiously, scarcely returning the embrace before she held her niece off to scan the sweet face so rosy with pleasure, "are you well?"

"Perfectly. Did any one say I was n't?"

"No; but — then, what has happened, child?"

"Nothing, Aunt Mira. What do you mean? What has worried you?"

"Why, you were reading your Bible, Frances."

The girl smiled at her aunt's tone. "Don't you do that yourself?" she asked.

"You know very well I do," returned Miss Miranda, "at the proper times. Sit down, Frances. I hope you 'll tell me," with a sudden gentle change of tone, "what 's the matter. Don't keep anything from me, child."

"Indeed, there is nothing," answered the girl, with a light laugh which might have reassured her aunt; but Miss Miranda was still not satisfied. Grandmothers of eighty years should have the good book at hand night and day. That is a natural arrangement; but for a girl sixty years younger to spend the bright afternoon hours poring over its pages could only indicate some crisis in life, and this acting, this forced cheerfulness, must be broken down. It might take time. Miss Miranda felt reproached for her long absence from the guardianship of this lamb.

"When did you come?" asked Frances, as they

seated themselves close together. "How did you dare to surprise me? I might have been away." Her eyes examined her aunt's face fondly, and Miranda scrutinized the limpid depths which seemed to contain no secret.

"Only a couple of hours ago. You 're looking well, Frances, I must say. How are your headaches?"

"Gone. I 've almost forgotten I ever had them."

"Good. I thought likely you 'd outgrow those."

"On the contrary, I began to think they would outlast me; but they were driven off last winter in Boston."

"All right, just so 's they 're gone. They interfered with you so, poor child." Miss Miranda's brain was still groping for the answer to her mental questioning.

"What 's been going on in the church lately?" she asked at last.

"I scarcely know. I 've spent my Sundays in Boston mostly, you know."

"Yes. Been any revival meetings going on? I ain't one that thinks there 's no good in revivals, Frances. Sudden conversions don't always stick, of course, but sometimes they do, and I for one say let them go on. It 's holy work trying to save souls, anyway."

Miss Miranda's keen eyes questioned her niece. Would she rise to this opportunity to explain her extraordinary behavior?

The girl shook her fair head slightly. "I have n't heard of any revival."

Miss Graves, after a waiting pause, changed the subject.

"What are you calculating to do this summer, Frances?"

"I've just been waiting for you."

Miranda luxuriated a moment in the pleasantness of the youth and affection beaming upon her. There was some subtle change in her niece which impressed itself upon her more and more every moment. No wonder Mrs. Smith said she had blossomed out.

"Then if she has n't been converted, she 's got a lover. It would be just like Frances to take it hard. She always was dreadful thorough from a child," she thought.

"We've both been too busy to write much," she said aloud. "Old folks plod on about the same, but young folks change fast. Perhaps you 've got a beau by this time, Frances?"

The girl's slender eyebrows raised humorously. "No," she said, with a slight movement of denial. "Do you think I 'm very long about it?"

Miss Miranda, foiled again, shrugged her shoulders. "I 'd kind of hate to have you as long as I 've been. Just suppose I was settled down somewhere now with a nice daughter like you."

"You are," said Frances, taking her aunt's hard hand between her own. "I 've one fine bit of news for you. I have a good position promised me for the fall. We 'll live together, and with what we have already and what I earn we shall do very well. I 've built the loveliest castle in the air."

"Bless your heart, Frances. I like the sound of that," replied Miss Miranda. Her ruminations were still contrasting the careful and serious characteristics familiar to her in the girl she had always known with the new something in her niece's face and manner. Satisfaction and lightheartedness were manifested in every word and gesture.

"It 's a great relief to you, I can see, child, to have your mind set at rest. I 'm afraid in past years you 've taken too much care of the future. I 'm afraid you thought Aunt Mira was kind of a broken reed. I ain't sure but I 've neglected you, Frances; but you know how it was. I could n't afford to sit up here in Melrose and do nothing."

"I do understand, indeed. I never felt neglected. I 've been homesick for you sometimes. I wanted to be with my very own, but I was busy."

"Where is it you are going to teach?"

"Here in Melrose. You shall bring your trunks away from Mrs. Smith's, and I 'll give dear Mrs. Peabody one hug, and then we 'll go off together and be a family!"

Her niece's face induced Miss Miranda to give the hand in her lap a love pat. "That 's just what we 'll do," she agreed heartily. "It 's five years that I 've given you up to these people. I suppose your winter in Boston was a great advantage to you."

"The greatest advantage of all my life."

"Anybody can see with half an eye that it 's improved you."

"Now about yourself," said the girl. "When can we begin house-hunting?"

"I wish we could this very day; but, Frances, I 've got another family on my hands first."

"Aunt Mira!" The girl's face clouded lightly.

"It 's a housekeeping position, for the summer only. I would n't promise, sure, thinking of you, till the lady — it 's a Miss Hereford, down on Long Island — told me I might have you come, too. I 've just been thinking we ought to be glad of the engagement, for, don't you see, I can save almost every cent I make, and it 'll be a nice little nest-egg for us to start in with in the fall."

Miss Miranda's face beamed unwontedly.

Frances nodded. "I see that; but it means good-by again. I 'm sure I 'd better not go there. I can make some pleasant plan. Don't you think about me."

"Yes, you can come, just as well as not. It 's one of these big summer houses where things go on as if it was a hotel. You and I shall have our own little corner, and it 's all understood, and I don't want you should refuse, Frances, unless there 's something else you want very much to do, for I 'm just hungry for you, child."

"But it will be so strange — living on this woman — I don't understand."

"You 'll understand better when you see the place. You can trust me. It will be all right for you to stay a few weeks, anyway; then you could come back here and wait for me. They 're English folks, and I shan't have anybody to speak

to scarcely unless you do come. The swells won't care to talk to me, and I won't care to talk to those New York servants; but I'd like to make the money, and if I just have you to cheer me up part of the time, I shall weather it first-rate."

"Then if you are sure the lady won't think it strange" —

"No, indeed. Her only fear is that I'll give her the slip. They've got an invalid boy there that seems to have made trouble with the housekeepers she's tried already. There must be a nigger in the fence somewhere, for surely no sick boy with a man to wait on him would be just cause and impediment enough to drive off a housekeeper who knows how to mind her own business. I'll go down first and learn the lay of the land, and then if I send for you, Frances, don't you hesitate to come. It's an awful pretty place, and would be a real nice outing for you unless something turns up that I don't know about now."

"Very well. How long before you go?"

"Oh, only a couple of days. Miss Hereford's as nervous as a cat. Poor thing! You can see America's a strange garret to her, and she wants me quick."

"Then we must celebrate. Let's go to the theatre this evening."

"Theatre!" Miss Miranda's thoughts reverted to the scene she had come in upon. "You go to the theatre, do you?"

"Whenever there is a good excuse for extravagance, yes. This is a good excuse; don't you think so?"

Miss Miranda nodded slightly, as her keen eyes interrogated the bright face. One possibility remained of explaining her niece's unnatural action.

"Is Bible history a part of the normal course you 've been taking, Frances?"

"No, Aunt Mira; but I 've been becoming acquainted with the Bible the past winter. I love to read it."

"Why, — of course," said Miss Miranda, hesitating a little uncomfortably. "You 've been brought up a good Christian girl, of course. You 've always," her voice rising slightly, "been acquainted with the Bible, I hope. You 've had example and precept both."

Frances's clear eyes rested on her wistfully. Memory furnished her the picture of Miss Miranda erect under the gaslight in her nightdress, her black hair braided and hanging down her back in a neat plait, while she read aloud a psalm or a dozen verses from the gospels, and a selection half as long from Thomas à Kempis, before extinguishing the gas and getting into bed.

"So I have, Aunt Mira," she answered.

They had some further talk on other subjects, and it was settled that they should go into Boston for a festive evening before Miss Miranda took her departure.

Her nose and mouth assumed their most Revolutionary aspect as she finally walked alone up the street.

"There 's something in Frances Rogers's mind that I have n't got at yet," she said to herself.

"She 's more changed than Lucy Smith said, and she acts as if she did n't have a care in the world. I wonder how long she 'd have read that Bible if I had n't gone in! Read the Bible all the afternoon and go to the theatre in the evening! Well! I wonder what her grandmother 'd have said to that!"

CHAPTER IV

THE AUTOMOBILE

MISS GRAVES had been a couple of days in her new position when she wrote the following letter to her niece: —

DEAR FRANCES, — Here I am all settled, and I think I 'm going to like it, though there are drawbacks, as I suppose there are to everything earthly. One thing sure: Miss Hereford is glad to have me. She looked as if she could almost fall into my arms when she saw me coming, though her maid, a woman she calls Dudley, had her nose in the air at the same angle it was when I came down before. I 'd like to pull that snippy nose some time. She 's the worst drawback. The invalid Miss Hereford talked about turns out to be a fool. I suppose his aunt did n't like to say right out he was one. Then there 's only one other member of the family, a Mr. Burling, — another nephew, I suppose, for he calls Miss Hereford Aunt Eleanor. Well, there 's only those three folks in this great house, and a lot of servants to take care of them, and me to see that they do it right. I guess that high-headed Dudley had more to do with the other housekeepers' going away than that poor

moon-calf did, though I must say it gives me a turn to meet him when I ain't expecting it. He 's so solemn, his great eyes would give anybody the creeps.

Miss Hereford spoke of her own accord about your coming, and I can promise you it 's a fine place. There ain't a window that don't look like an oil painting.

One thing I want to prepare you for. They 'll meet you at the depot with a horse that 's a young hurricane; but don't be scared. He won't do more than threaten to run on his hind legs and make mince-meat of the carriage. I know I 've lost a pound each time I 've ridden behind him, but the driver says he 's never done any harm. You never saw so much style in all your life as you 'll see on that coachman and groom and the harness. Then, when you get here, you 'll only find a dowdy little woman in a lace cap, and her pug dog, one idle man in a bicycle suit, and an idiot. I told you they were English, did n't I? It all seems very queer; but as long as they 're willing to give us a chance to be together, I won't complain, and I 'm going to do all I can to earn my money. The cook and maids sized me up, as the boys say, when I first came around, and I guess they 're going to behave themselves. If they don't, I know where I can get others.

The letter closed with directions to Frances as to dates and trains, and then Miss Miranda set herself to counting the hours before the girl could arrive.

A few mornings afterward, Maurice Burling entered the breakfast room. Miss Hereford was there before him, and turned a cheerful face to greet his entrance.

"What a change, Aunt Eleanor," he remarked. "This smile-wreathed countenance should be photographed and given Miss Graves as a testimonial for future use; for it is a paradox that any one with such a lugubrious name can have such an enlivening effect."

"She is a jewel, a treasure," returned Miss Hereford devoutly; "and really very sensible with Dudley; that is," seeing an ominous look gather on her companion's brow, "Dudley is always a little homesick. You can't wonder, can you, Maurice? And she is n't so pleasant, always, but she tries," eagerly, "indeed she tries, and the housekeeper is so sensible, as I say. All goes very well, and it makes life a different thing, does n't it?"

"One need only look at you to say yes," returned the other, chipping an egg-shell.

"I don't know that I told you that Miss Graves has a niece coming to visit her. Yes, I found I could not secure her unless I let her see this young woman, a schoolteacher, I believe."

"Ah! A Yankee schoolma'am to be added to our collection. Well!"

"She is arriving to-day. Will you see that Harvey meets the noon train?"

"I have to be up that way myself at that hour. I 'll bring her back if I don't forget it."

"Don't chaff, Maurice," anxiously. "I would n't

have anything occur to annoy Miss Graves, you know."

The man laughed. "Which are you the more afraid of, Aunt Eleanor, Dudley or the housekeeper?"

"Maurice, I have one motto until we get back to dear England," said Miss Hereford impressively. "It is this: 'Peace at any price!'"

Thus it was that when Frances Rogers left the train she looked about in vain for the liveried coachman and groom, with whom in a little temporary splendor she had expected to drive to her aunt's abode.

While she hesitated, a station agent approached her.

"This way, please." He led the way to a high vehicle whose horse was stepping restlessly in its place with arching neck. The driver, a smooth-faced man in knickerbockers, jumped out as she approached and lifted his hat.

"The engine still gets on his nerves a bit," he explained. "I did n't like to leave him. This is Miss Graves?"

"Miss Rogers," said the girl composedly; "but Miss Graves is my aunt." The musical accent of a refined English voice and speech had fallen on her ear for the first time, and she gave the stranger a comprehensive look before he handed her into the high cart.

As they started he spoke again. "This horse is something of an experiment; but, pardon me, I don't wish to make you nervous. There 's no occa-

sion, indeed. He seems not to have a fault beyond youth and high spirits."

"He 's a beauty," said Frances in her even voice.

"And you 're not far off one yourself," thought her companion. "Hooray for the Yankee school-ma'am!"

"This is Mr. Burling, I suppose," thought Frances.

"I was just thinking," she added aloud, "that it was nice for me that you are driving yourself. I should be tempted to be afraid with a coachman."

Burling glanced at the speaker again. He felt some surprise that Miss Graves's niece should be so well dressed, so generally effective.

"Thank you; all the same that would hurt the coachman's feelings very much."

"I think the trouble with drivers is that they don't love the horses enough," said the girl.

"That must be an American vice, then," said Burling, smiling.

"Oh, yes. I remember I have heard that Englishmen care more for horses than for people."

"Do our cousins talk that way about us?"

"Well, it is n't so here. I 'm watching the progress of automobile inventions. I want all the traffic wagons run by machinery. Then the horses can all be high-spirited."

"An attractive thought, that."

They both watched the strong muscles under their steed's shining coat for a few minutes in silence. Burling's thoughts had strayed across the

water to problems in the home land when he heard his companion's even voice again.

"I beg your pardon!" he exclaimed.

"I was only saying what a pretty country this is," said the girl, "for a flat one."

"Very," returned the other, pulling himself together. "Your aunt has improved its appearance for our family. She makes our household run smoothly."

"Aunt Mira knows how to make people comfortable. I think" — added the girl, in whom had already risen an uneasy sense of giving trouble — "I think it is more than kind of Miss Hereford to ask me to come. Aunt Mira is the only mother I have."

"This is a nice little Yankee schoolma'am," thought Burling judicially.

"I hope you 'll enjoy yourself," he returned.

"And I hope it did n't disturb your plans to come to the depot," she said, giving expression to the thought that had been uppermost ever since they started.

"Not the least in the world," he answered promptly. "It lay on my way from the golf club, where I had a little business this morning."

"Not pleasure?" asked Frances, regarding him for the first time with a smile.

"Not this morning. Do you play?" The question came involuntarily, and it would have surprised him to receive an affirmative answer.

She shook her fair head. "Oh, no. I 've been too busy."

"But there are vacations."

"I tutored all last summer."

"You are a teacher?"

"I hope to be one in the autumn."

"Ah. It is new work, then?"

"Yes." The girl's face beamed. "The circumstances seemed very difficult, but I demonstrated such a good position."

"You — I beg pardon?"

She crimsoned finely. "I beg yours," she said, embarrassed. "My thoughts ran away with me."

Her companion's curious eyes did not leave her flushed face.

"You —demonstrated," he repeated reflectively. "I know the expression. You are a Christian Scientist."

Her face changed, and she looked up at him eagerly. "Are you one, too?" she asked gladly.

His eyes returned to the horses' ears. "Hardly," he returned. His tone was not lost upon her. "I have some friends, though, at home, who have tried to pluck me from the burning. Once I attended one of their meetings — testimony, do you call it?"

"A testimonial meeting, yes. You heard wonderful things, then."

"Wonderful if true. I can read the same any day in the advertisements of a quack medicine." There was a pause, and he looked back at her. "I suppose I ought to ask your pardon for that speech."

"Yes, but you don't know it," she answered

simply; and her undisturbed face and voice caused a light scorn to supplant her companion's admiring sentiments.

"You 're a very superior set, you — Scientists," he said, with a smile at the emphasized word.

She flushed, but kept silence.

"Now you 're treating me, no doubt," he added after a minute. "You see I know a lot about it."

"I see that you are densely ignorant if you suppose that would be possible," she answered equably.

He laughed. "For people who fifteen minutes ago had never seen one another, we are getting on," he remarked.

"I am sorry to seem impertinent, but I had to answer truly," said the girl.

"Oh, yes. I am aware that truthfulness is your long suit," he responded, and moved by his irritation he flicked the horse with the whip.

At the same moment an automobile came hissing around a bend in the walled road ahead of them. The excited young horse reared and sprang. Burling spoke to him soothingly and held him firmly, but to no purpose. There was a rush, a crash, and the sun seemed blotted out for the occupants of the dogcart.

The man in the automobile stopped his machine as speedily as possible and ran forward to where the horse, trembling in every limb, stood snorting by the pile of stones in the roadside which had caught the cart and stopped his career.

Burling, covered with dust, was on his feet in the road by the side of the half-overset cart, still

clinging to the reins. His face was pale as he looked wildly about him.

"The lady — where is she?" he ejaculated to the hurrying stranger.

"Must have been thrown over the wall. I'll hold the horse."

Maurice, hatless and dusty, strode to the low wall that divided stretches of green field from the road. The forebodings of his hard-beating heart were realized.

There, motionless on the ground, lay the form of the housekeeper's niece. One hand was thrown over her face; the other lay relaxed beside her. There were rocks in the field, and even as Burling climbed over the wall, his lamed arms refusing to assist him to vault, he noted that it was the meadow grass that couched the inanimate girl, and that the rocks had been avoided. White and breathless, he approached and stooped over the body.

The revulsion of relief almost made him faint as the hand moved from the girl's face and she gave him a wan smile. "That knocked — all the breath — out of me," she said.

"Do you feel pain? Your back — your arms?" asked Burling in poignant anxiety.

"I'm sure I'm all right. I'm a little dazed. Just give me your hand."

Burling bit his lip. "Both my wrists are strained. I cannot lift you. There is a man in the road."

"Do not call him!"

"Then support yourself on my arm. See if you can rise."

"Of course I can rise." She did so slowly, leaning on his arm. His anxious face scanned hers. "I 'm as good as new," she said, after a pause. "Indeed I am. Did n't I pick out a soft spot to fall!"

They moved to the wall, Burling scarcely crediting his good fortune in having failed to kill Miss Graves's guest. He could hear Aunt Eleanor deploring the effect of annoying the housekeeper.

Frances stepped over the wall, resting her hand on Burling's shoulder, to the amazement of the stranger at the horse's head, and as she approached she acknowledged him.

"I can't be sorry enough," he said, looking from her to her escort.

"Was n't the horse dreadfully frightened, poor thing!" said the girl, coming close to the restless animal and smoothing his panting side. The creature turned his brilliant eye upon her. "There was nothing to be afraid of, was there, dear old fellow?" she went on soothingly.

"It 's a wonder he did n't break away from the cart," said the stranger. "I don't understand it. I can't say how much I regret" — he added again earnestly, and paused.

"I thought he was entirely used to automobiles," said Burling, who had succeeded in finding his hat and was snapping the dust from it as well as his strained hands would allow. "It was my fault. I touched him with the whip at the wrong moment."

He moved to the horse's head, where the stranger still stood, then recollected his helplessness.

"Will you kindly back him into the road for me?" he said. "I have lamed my wrists."

When this was accomplished the stranger spoke.

"I should be glad to be of any service. Shall I drive the young lady home and return for you?"

Frances saw in Burling's face the repugnance he felt to giving publicity to the accident.

"The horse is quite gentle now," she said. "See?" Indeed, the animal had ceased trembling and stood quietly. "Don't you think we could manage? Is it far?"

"A very short distance," returned Burling. "Supposing we get in and see how he behaves. We can turn down this lane and avoid passing the machine."

Frances smoothed and patted the horse's bright coat, and talked to him again in a low tone before she accepted the chauffeur's assistance to mount to the high seat.

The man glanced over the vehicle once more as Burling climbed up.

"The wheel getting wedged between those two stones saved your cart," he said. "The whole thing was a wonderful escape. I can't tell you how sorry" —

"Don't mention it," said Burling, and the two men lifted their hats, while Frances bowed kindly to the discomfited stranger.

The horse still stood, strangely subdued.

"You can go, Dick," said Burling, addressing him, "but no transports, please."

The horse started, and Frances saw her companion's wince of pain. "Let me take the reins," she said, suiting the action to the word. Burling did not resist. His pale face regarded his companion for an instant.

"She 's game," he thought, "if she is a crank."

"Dick is not precisely a lady's horse," he remarked.

"He is going to be for a few minutes," she answered.

"We 've only one turn to make. It is the first we come to on the right. Dick did pretty well for himself not to break his knees on those stones."

"Dick did his best," said the girl, and the horse shook his spirited head as if recalling that dreadful moment when the clattering monster rushed upon his vision and simultaneously the unaccustomed sting smote his flank.

"You must still be so glad that I was driving you instead of the coachman!" added Burling.

"Certainly. Would n't it annoy you more to have his wrists strained than your own?" Frances smiled.

"He does n't play golf."

"Ah, there 's the rub!" she laughed.

"I feel even more apologetic than our friend the chauffeur," went on Maurice a little stiffly. "This is a very unworthy way to treat a guest, but I hope a bad beginning to your visit may make a good ending."

They had passed the turn in the road, and Dick now entered the driveway leading to the house.

"We have no need to think of anything but giving thanks," she answered gravely.

"It 's a fact," said her companion with equal seriousness. "If it were n't for my wrists I should believe the whole thing to be a dream. I think you must bear a charmed life, Miss Rogers."

"Yes," she nodded, "and so did Dick in avoiding a scratch, and so did the cart in having one of its wheels wedge and thereby save the rest."

Her tone and manner confirmed an irritating suspicion which had already begun to rankle in Burling's breast. "By Jove, I believe she is preparing a testimonial," he thought. "She 'll speak in meeting about this some time!"

"Do you mean to say," he began with scarcely veiled contempt.

"I don't mean to say anything," she put in mildly. "Perhaps you would like to be holding these as we reach the house," and she slid the reins into her companion's hands, so that when they swept up to the entrance and the groom met them, there was no sign of trouble beyond the suggestions of a dusty drive.

"She 's a pretty good imitation of a thoroughbred," thought Burling reluctantly, in spite of the soreness of his mind and body.

CHAPTER V

A CONTROVERSY

"Now, this is cosy," declared Miss Miranda, her usually stoical features expressing the satisfaction she felt at seeing her niece opposite her at the little tea-table where they were taking their evening meal.

"This is the way you live, then?" remarked Frances, looking about her curiously.

"Yes, it 's take partners and swing to corners when it comes to meal-time in this house. The poor boy, Mr. William, prefers to eat alone, and of course his attendant waits on him, so Miss Hereford and Mr. Burling have to do their best to fill the big dining-room. How did you like having the monarch of all he surveys to drive you home?"

"Is he the monarch of all he surveys?"

"Yes, indeed. He 's got all his wits about him, and that 's enough to set a man up in this house."

"Miss Hereford is kind to you?"

"Indeed she is; but I see very little of her. Between them and me is a gulf fixed," said Miss Miranda, smiling comfortably.

Frances looked at her, as if digesting this.

"I 'm only a hupper servant, Miss, you know," added the housekeeper, with an extraordinary flight

of imitation but utter amiability. "But a bloomin' lot we care" —

"Why, Aunt Miranda!" laughed the girl, amazed at this reckless language.

"I 've caught it from Sanders; he 's the attendant of the poor moon-calf. Wait till you 'ear him talk. It 's only 'e and Dudley the maid that are snobs. Miss Hereford and Mr. Burling mind their own business, and respect me for minding mine. I don't ask a thing of them except my money. I 'm thinking all the time of that apartment and the good care I 'm going to give my little girl after all the neglect I 've shown her."

The speaker looked thoughtfully at her niece.

"It may be all for the best, too, Frances," she added impressively. "Other folks perhaps have done more for you than I could, and more than they would if I 'd been around. You 've come out first-rate."

"I have always found good friends, and especially this last winter."

Something in the speech and a sudden eloquence in the girl's eyes recalled to Miss Graves her problem. "That 's when she experienced religion," she reflected. "Some time she 's going to tell me all about that. I must n't expect to stay away from the young one and scarce ever write to her, and then have her ready to tell me her inmost thoughts first pop when we meet."

When aunt and niece were preparing for bed that evening Miss Graves caught sight of a strange discoloration on the girl's back and shoulder.

"Frances Rogers, what have you been doing to yourself?" she ejaculated, hastening to adjust her eyeglasses and draw near. "And your back! Why, what have you done, you child? I thought at supper you looked pale."

"I had a fall."

"I should think you had had a fall! Why, you're black and blue all over! Wait till I get the Pond's Extract and then tell me all about it. What a mercy you did n't break any bones!"

Frances seized Miss Graves's arm as she was bustling off.

"No, Aunt Mira. Wait. I don't want anything. It is nearly well."

"Nearly well? Why, look in the glass at yourself! I've got some splendid liniment; perhaps you'd rather have that. I'm going to bind that shoulder right up. 'T is n't any trouble, you foolish young one," misunderstanding her niece's protesting movements.

"But I assure you it is practically well, Aunt Mira. The trouble is only skin deep, like beauty." Frances smiled, hoping to reassure Miss Graves, who, being not a little proud of her discrimination in remedies and long experience in their application, objected to this non-appreciation of her abilities.

"Fie! You don't know what you're talking about!" she replied impatiently. "Let me go! Liniment won't do it any harm, and I'm going to rub it right on. We're a long way from a doctor."

"No, no, it is being treated now — the same doctor who cured my headaches."

Miss Graves turned back from a rush toward the closet.

"Why did n't you tell me you had some stuff of your own? Bring it out and I 'll fix it for you."

Frances's cheeks were flushed. "If you will read me the Ninety-first Psalm, Aunt Mira," she said slowly, "it will do me more good than anything."

Miss Graves stared, and sat down on the edge of the bed. "What has come to the girl?" she thought. Frances stood leaning against the dresser and returning her aunt's amazed look.

"The Rogers always did take religion hard," said Miss Graves, when she could speak. "I suppose you 've joined the church lately?"

"Yes."

"What one?"

"The Mother Church," replied the girl.

Miss Miranda uttered an inarticulate cry. "What do you mean?" she ejaculated. "Are you a Roman Catholic, Frances Rogers — but I thought they never read their Bibles!" she added in distress.

"I thought Mrs. Smith might have told you," said Frances. "I am a Christian Scientist."

Miss Graves's expression changed and became stony. "She — she did n't dare to, I guess," she said at last.

"Do you know anything about Science?" asked

the girl timidly, after waiting in vain for further remark. She loved her aunt, and her heart was sinking as she looked at her.

"I know all I want to," was the curt rejoinder. "I know my own niece has turned from the religion of her fathers and set out to worship an idol; an old woman up in New Hampshire."

The girl caught her lip between her teeth, and her breast heaved. After a pause she crossed the room and sat down on the bed beside her aunt. She put an arm around the rigid, unresponsive figure.

"Why should you turn from me, Aunt Mira? You spoke of our forefathers. Why did they leave every comfort to come here to a desolate land?"

Miss Graves was dumb.

"For freedom to worship God, was n't it?" persisted the girl.

"Yes, it was," returned Miss Miranda sonorously. "Freedom to worship God — not Mrs. Eddy."

"Would you be glad to be mistaken, and find out that I do worship God as truly as you do?"

"I 'll be glad to take you back — your church will — your friends will, the minute you 've had enough of that blasphemous nonsense. A woman setting herself up" —

"Aunt Mira, there are two sides to every story. May I tell mine?"

The nearness of the fresh young cheek and the pressure of the embracing arm raised a strange combination of emotions in Miss Graves's breast.

"I suppose if you 're bound to, I can't help myself," she answered.

Frances began talking in a low voice that was steady and gentle.

"That woman in New Hampshire whom you speak of, loved God so deeply and truly that he taught her how to draw near to him consciously. By close and persistent study of the Bible and the consecration of all her thoughts, she learned of her Father the rules by which all humanity may approach him consciously now, without waiting for life in another world. She learned that the same truth which healed in the presence of Jesus is as actively present now as in those days in Galilee. When proof of this came to her repeatedly, her heart was flooded with joy, and she supposed she had only to voice the glad tidings to have everybody accept the truth with thanksgiving. What she had to offer was so good that she did not understand how it could be met with anything but glad response — certainly not otherwise by Christians. She had discovered that the apathy shown by the church toward the promises and specific commands of Jesus in the last chapter of Mark was wrong; but to her amazement she found no one ready to believe this. As soon as she ventured to voice the glorious redeeming truth, cries of blasphemy were heard. Instead of the love and mutual rejoicing which she had pictured as results of the introduction of Christian Science, she met aversion and hatred. Not content with ridiculing and despising her teaching, her enemies

slandered her character. In almost utter loneliness she set forth then with ideas readjusted to the cold facts, but without for an instant losing courage and purpose. She lifted her heart to her Father and renewed her vow of faithfulness. Did she not know that what He had given her to offer humanity was the pearl of great price? It must not be cast before defamers, and therefore she began to hedge it about with worldly wisdom. Those who would learn of it must give something for its possession, as guaranty of earnestness. Thereupon arose the cry of mercenary motives, — the un-Christlikeness of accepting money for healing and teaching. Still this woman pressed on, loving and working in a constant hailstorm of derision, her self-effacement complete in the Light which always beamed upon her inner consciousness. She was sure of the result, and bore all stinging contempt uncomplainingly while she bided her Father's time. At last the addition to her few followers began to be rapid, and soon instead of coming by tens into the faith that Jesus Christ yesterday, to-day, and forever fulfills his promises to them that believe, they began to be counted by thousands. The lonely and despised woman who had not faltered, now found herself at the head of an organization which required wisdom for its orderly management. A new cry arose: 'Mrs. Eddy is a Pope! Those poor people don't dare call their souls their own! She rules them with a rod of iron. She exacts tribute to such an extent that she is rolling in money!' Meanwhile the people who, sitting in

darkness, had seen a great light, yielded loving obedience to the wise mother who had led them out of the wilderness, and by their unity of action preserved in harmony the hundreds of churches which sprang into being. Is it any wonder that some of these people who had had their mourning changed into gladness felt such a passion of love and gratitude toward the woman who had shown them the light, that they subjected her to another temptation? Had Mrs. Eddy cared for ostentation, for adoration, she might now have had unnumbered ovations; but just as in the days of her fiery trials she ignored the darts of hatred, looking always up, not down, so now she uncompromisingly turned aside personal adulation, pointing always away from herself, on and up. She is traveling now *with* her army of Christian soldiers, not waiting on some far-off height to receive them. Oh, Aunt Mira, can't you see how you hurt me when you talk as you did a few minutes ago?" Frances's arm tightened and her head fell on her aunt's shoulder. Had she wept, Miss Graves might have embraced her; but her manner was as controlled as her gentle voice.

Miss Miranda was silent, and still rigid.

"You 're in earnest, Frances," she said at last; "but you 've got to let me be honest. It 's a blasphemous thing for a woman to set herself up to do the same things Christ did."

"Why, Aunt Mira, our Lord said, 'The works that I do shall ye do also.' Mrs. Eddy does not make herself equal with him simply because she

accepts the gospel as all truth. Why have the churches paid no attention to Christ's assurance as to the signs that should follow them that believe? Let me show you something." The girl rose suddenly, and going to her satchel returned with a small black morocco book. "This is a copy of 'Science and Health,' Mrs. Eddy's book."

Miss Graves looked at the little volume out of the corner of her eye as Frances resumed her seat and turned over the pages.

"I suppose you read that instead of the Bible," was on Miss Miranda's lips to say, when a memory arose to contradict this established belief of hers concerning the body of people calling themselves Scientists, — a name which had always aroused her scornful amusement.

"Here it is in the preface," said Frances. "This is what the 'idol,' the 'pope,' the woman who 'sets herself up to be the equal of Jesus,' says of herself: [1] 'To-day, though rejoicing in some progress, she finds herself still a willing disciple at the heavenly gate, waiting for the Mind of Christ.'"

Frances looked up at her aunt, and silence fell for a few seconds; then Miss Miranda spoke.

"Frances, you can't ever make a Christian Scientist out of me," she said slowly and impressively.

"Very well. Christian Science does n't need you, Aunt Mira."

The kindness of the voice was unmistakable, but Miss Graves shifted her position. A pretty idea that an upstart new religion like this should n't

[1] *Science and Health*, p. ix.

wear the laurel if it could summon beneath its banner a Congregationalist in good and regular standing like herself! She had a firmly rooted belief that its congregations were all composed of ill-balanced faddists or young enthusiasts like this girl.

"Christian Science does n't need any of us," continued Frances. "The only question is whether we need it. I feel that I have been wonderfully taken care of to-day. The whole of Christian Science is in the Ninety-first Psalm. I want to read it to-night. Do you mind if I read it aloud?"

"I knew the Ninety-first Psalm before you were thought of," returned Miss Graves. "I guess there 's a good deal in it besides Christian Science. Of course you can read it if you want to."

The girl rose to get the Bible, and at once found her place and began to read.

Tortures could not have wrung from Miss Graves the confession that the familiar lines seemed invested with a new majesty and tenderness to-night as they fell clearly from those young lips. A devout faith and gladness sounded through every word.

Miss Miranda maintained herself stiff and motionless until the voice had finished; then she rose and went on silently making ready for bed.

Frances still sat in her place. She felt the turmoil and the hurt in her aunt's breast, and after a minute's thought she decided to speak.

"I 'm going to tell you a secret, Aunt Mira. Dick, the horse, ran away with us to-day."

Miss Graves turned about, all other considerations forgotten.

"He was frightened by an automobile. He ran into a pile of stones, and I was thrown over the wall into a field."

"My lamb!" exclaimed Miss Miranda, adjusting her glasses and returning to examine the bruises. "But I saw Mr. Burling drive up as brisk as ever. I don't understand" —

"The field had plenty of sharp rocks. I struck nothing except the long grass, and only had the shock of the fall."

"It's a miracle! And the horse — and Mr. Burling?"

"Mr. Burling suffered a severe strain. Otherwise there was no trouble."

"Frances Rogers, do you think?" — Miss Miranda paused, held by a sudden suspicion.

The girl smiled up into the excited eyes. "I know," she answered.

"Do you mean to say that if I'd been in your place my Heavenly Father would n't have done as much for me as he did for you?"

Frances flushed at the resentful tone. "You know that I don't believe he loves one of His children better than another. I can't explain now. He asks us all to trust him, and I did — that 's all."

Miss Graves still stood, her hands folded before her. "Then there is n't any doctor taking care of those bruises," she said at last.

"Certainly. I said the same one who banished my headaches."

"But I suppose you had — what is it they call it — absent treatment for those."

"Mental treatment, do you mean? Yes, I did; but I don't need any human help for this. I know more than I did then. I went through a class — took the lessons, you know — this spring."

"What did you learn?"

At the brusque question Frances looked off a moment. "We learned how to be more helpful."

"Do you mean you learned how to think those treatments — whatever they are?"

"Yes."

Miss Graves shrugged her way back to the dresser, and nothing more was said until they were both ready for bed.

"You 've had a big shock," said Miss Miranda then. "If you were my child, you 'd take a dose of coffea."

"I am your child, Aunt Mira," replied Frances, smiling; "but tell me this. If you believe Jesus Christ was the same yesterday, is the same to-day, and will be the same forever, — if you believe he is with us as he said he would be to the end of the world, tell me why you suppose he needs Hahnemann to-night any more than he did by the Sea of Galilee?"

Miss Miranda turned over in bed with a jerk.

"You 've got the real Rogers obstinacy," she said. "Good-night. You 'll be as stiff as a mackerel in the morning. All your own fault. Good-night."

CHAPTER VI

THE BEGINNING

MAURICE BURLING had no objection to liniment beyond the fact that bandages would rouse Miss Hereford's anxiety and necessitate telling his mortifying adventure; so he rubbed his injured members after satisfying himself that no break had occurred, and then started in to possess his soul in patience.

"I have talked with Miss Graves this morning," was Miss Hereford's greeting when he entered the breakfast room, "and I don't see that she is at all different."

"Did you expect her to be elated?"

"I did indeed; but she is as calm and unmoved as ever. She *says*, Maurice," lowering her voice, "that there is n't any Indian blood in her, but," — shaking her head, "I don't know. Just see how stoical she is!"

Burling smiled at his plate, meantime wondering what he should do when the question of food concerned something which offered greater resistance in preparation than an egg.

"Miss Graves has what her countrymen call 'faculty,'" he replied. "That is all that matters to you. She has faculty. How is her niece this morning?"

Miss Hereford looked surprised. "I — I believe I asked for her. I scarcely remember."

"Oh, have n't you seen Miss Rogers?"

"Is that the niece's name? No, I 've not seen her. I dare say I shall before she goes."

The stranger's advent not having caused any special jubilation on Miss Graves's part, Miss Hereford had lost the little interest she once felt in her arrival.

"You must see her at once," said Burling, in his pleasant, masterful voice.

"Must?"

"Why, certainly. You would n't ignore the niece of the President of these United States, would you — especially under your own roof?"

"Maurice Burling!" Miss Hereford poised her egg spoon in air and gazed wide-eyed. "Is it possible that this Miss Rogers is the niece of Mr. McKinley?"

"Not that I know of," returned Maurice, genially; "but if not, then her uncle is liable to become the next president. It 's best to be on the safe side."

"Where did you meet her uncle, pray?"

"I 've never had that pleasure."

"Oh!" slowly. "I see what you mean: that over here one can never tell."

"Precisely. Over here one can never tell."

Miss Hereford sighed, and chipped another egg. "Well, then, all I can say is that I shall be very glad to get home to a place where one *can* tell. It is very unsettling and very puzzling — all this."

"You 'll find no trace of Indian ancestry in Miss Rogers, at any rate," pursued Burling.

"Yes. I caught a glimpse of her as you drove up yesterday. I thought she was fair."

"Divinely tall and most divinely fair," remarked Maurice mildly.

"Do you mean that she 's pretty — Miss Graves's niece pretty?"

"Why not? Miss Graves is fine looking herself. There 's a regular Plymouth Rock firmness in her profile. She 'd make a fine cameo, would Miss Graves. As a matter of fact, however, Miss Rogers does not resemble her."

"Is she along in years or young?" asked Miss Hereford somewhat fretfully. "I 'm sure it 's very tiresome in you, Maurice, to say I need think about her one way or the other."

"Oh, you need only say a few words of greeting."

"Shall I —" doubtfully, "should one shake hands with her?"

"By all means," returned Burling suavely. "When you are attending her reception at the White House you will be glad to remember it."

"Ah, you silly boy!" said Miss Hereford impatiently, pushing back her chair.

It was little wonder that Miss Hereford had not distinguished signs of rejoicing in Miss Miranda's countenance this morning. The housekeeper had wakened under a vague cloud, which she soon recognized as the effect of the conversation of the evening before. She determined not to refer again

to the accident, for as she and her niece performed their toilets, it seemed to her that she was the sorer of the two. She was the girl's hostess now, as well as her nearest of kin. She would do her duty by her, despite the fact that the other's confession had robbed the situation of its spontaneous ease and pleasure.

Frances read perfectly what was passing in her aunt's thoughts, and on her side determined to be silent henceforth concerning the faith which honesty had compelled her to declare, and after a few days she would suggest a return to Boston, to test whether such a result would be a relief to Miss Graves. The situation was one which necessitated considerable work in her own thought. It was not easy to rise above the sense of loss which she experienced in the subtle change of her aunt's manner, but she tried to accept the problem in the right spirit.

Mr. Burling readily comprehended why the housekeeper had disappointed her mistress with a long countenance this morning. Such a shock as Miss Rogers had undergone was bound to produce after-effects. Since Miss Hereford knew no particulars, he must discover himself for how much damage he was responsible.

As he and Aunt Eleanor left the table, she sighed heavily.

"What does that mean?" he inquired.

"What, Maurice?"

"You sighed like a furnace."

"Did I? It was unconscious; but I suppose I

was thinking of Billy. He had such a bad day yesterday."

"Ah! I am sorry I was away so much."

"Sanders was quite put to it, poor creature. Oh, Sanders," for the man here entered the room with a breakfast tray, "how is Mr. William this morning?"

"'E 'as n't said a word yet, mum. It 's a good sign in a way, mum."

Sanders spoke primly. His dignity and importance were such as befit a martyr whose sufferings command large compensation in coin of the realm.

"'E does n't notice me to-day, but yesterday morning 'e threw the teapot at me. It was most hunpleasantly 'ot, mum."

"Ah! and it went on like that all day," sighed Miss Hereford. "I can't think what upsets the poor child so sometimes."

"'E was uncommon testy the 'ole day, as you say, mum. In a fit of habsence of mind I beat 'im a game of draughts, and 'e kicked me."

"Kicked you? Oh, Sanders!"

"Yes, mum; in the shin, if you 'll pardon my naming it."

"Very well, Sanders," said Burling. "I shall be at home to-day."

"Yes, sir," and the man withdrew, his stiffly carried head uplifted and tilted a little to the side in his usual attitude of long-suffering deference.

Miss Hereford's sad eyes sought Burling's.

Maurice was entertaining a humorous considera-

tion of the variety of bumps and bruises gathered under one roof this morning.

"Ups and downs, Aunt Eleanor; ups and downs," he said, smiling into her wistful eyes.

"If only Billy does n't outlive us!" she sighed. "If only he does n't! But he is so strong, Maurice, — so frightfully strong. Sometimes when I look at him in his beautiful young manhood and think what he might be, and what this world would be to us if it were n't for this blight, I feel as if I should go crazy — crazy, Maurice, with grief and — yes, I 'm ashamed to confess such wickedness, but rebellion, too. Oh, I feel so rebellious, you can't think!" She buried her face in her little hands.

"Now, now, Aunt Eleanor! This is n't like you! Remember those good sermons you have preached to me on resignation."

"I do, I do," she returned brokenly. "Always after a time I come to my right mind and remember that it is my Father's chastening; but I 'm getting to be little better than a heathen at times, and it 's all with being so long away from our dear rector."

"I 'll venture he 'll find you as sound as ever, don't you fret. When Billy is dressed, I 'll go to see him."

Miss Hereford shook her head. "I judge from what Sanders said, he 'll not speak to-day. Sanders finds that a relief, poor creature. I dare say it gives him an easy time; but it 's dreadfully sad to me when I can't make my child open his lips, and

to have him stare at me so coldly. At such times even you can't liven him, Maurice."

"Cheer up, little woman!" repeated Burling. "Unless you keep up your courage I shall have to pack you off home."

"To England?" wistfully. "But you can't make me go — not without you and the child."

"With me and the child, then."

Miss Hereford shook her head. "There would n't be any blessing on it if we went too soon; and, Maurice," she added, lowering her voice, "there is one thing that helps me to be content here. I dread to see my poor brother."

"Oh, you need n't pity him, nor dread him, either, so far as that goes. You worry your head about a number of things, don't you, Aunt Eleanor? Take a brace, as they say in America, and make up your mind to be jolly. I 'm a regular Mark Tapley myself this morning," added Burling, knowing how he could most effectively divert her thoughts. "I strained my wrist yesterday."

Miss Hereford's expression changed from dejection to interest. "There, Maurice, what have I always told you? I knew you would overdo at golf. You always laughed at me; but I told you you did n't know when you 'd had enough. Now you see you 've overdone your arm!"

Burling accepted this reflection on his wiry muscle in silence, and submitted his right wrist to the bandage for which Miss Hereford instantly dispatched Dudley. The maid stood by and held the paraphernalia for her mistress, thinking her

own sharp thoughts while Miss Hereford enlarged on the desirability of moderation in sports. Had not Mr. Burling's man confided to the maid the dent in his master's hat and the dust ingrained into his clothes? He had even given it as his opinion that the golf club was a pretty gay proposition, and that, considering the early hour of the day, Mr. Burling was going it; Harvey's testimony regarding the scraped and scratched condition of the cart wheel corroborated his own deductions.

Maurice decided not to confess the sensations of his other wrist, lest it interfere with Miss Hereford's complete satisfaction in her diagnosis; and as soon as he could escape from her kindly ministrations he took his way out of doors, postponing even the consolation of his pipe until he should have found Miss Graves and made his inquiries.

In his morning stroll about the house he often met Miss Miranda, whose brusque directness amused him, and whose manner always implied that, like Brer Rabbit, she did n't have "time to tarry."

There was a small vine-clad porch opening from the housekeeper's room where he sometimes found her, absorbed in calculations, her eyeglasses set well down on her nose as she pored over her books.

As he walked along the smooth turf he thought uncomfortably of yesterday's misadventure. That moment in which he had stooped over the young stranger who was in his care was about as unpleasant as any he had ever experienced. The sensation had not yet had time to fade. The smile that

came gradually to those wan parted lips had given him the most genuine joy that a smile had ever bestowed. The Yankee schoolma'am, the niece of his housekeeper, had been for that moment the most important being on earth. The fact would have been the same had she not had one charm to arouse his interest, but his present pilgrimage of inquiry would have been taken in a different and more perfunctory spirit. In his character of bachelor at thirty-five he was naturally hypercritical, with an extremely good opinion of his own powers of discrimination, and he looked upon young girls of scarce twenty as kittens whose gambols, if they happened to be pretty kittens, it was amusing to watch.

One girl of twenty he had loved. It was ten years ago now. She had died, and the ten years had been mostly spent, as he often declared wearily to himself, in sick-nursing.

His older sister had been his other love. She, too, had gone, and the duty he had taken up in her lifetime appealed to him with tenfold force at her death. Could he ever forget the concentrated appeal in her dear eyes as they fixed on his for the last time, and her lips framed the one word, "Billy"?

Well, the sun shone gloriously this morning, the water sparkled, and — he had not killed Miss Rogers; therefore, though his lame wrists annoyed him at every turn, and life was a very humdrum affair when it did not present repulsive problems, he was not complaining. Miss Graves might be

about to frown upon him, and her frown would be no light matter; but he must face the music.

He had reached her porch, and now walked around its vine curtain. The books were on the table and a woman was bending over them; but those sunny tresses were unlike the raven locks of the housekeeper, and the delicate shadows of the fine-leaved vine played in waving tracery over a blue cotton gown.

"Miss Rogers!"

She looked up at the exclamation and greeted him.

"What possible right have you to be sitting there?" he asked, standing, hat in hand, under the vine tassels that were pendent above the entrance.

She smiled. She was a very pretty kitten indeed, he decided. He wondered if she ever gamboled.

"Where should I be?" she asked.

"In bed, of course. Any self-respecting young woman who had been lofted over a bunker on to the green as you were yesterday ought to be laid up to-day."

"I'm sorry to disappoint you."

"No, I 'm in earnest. I feel about one hundred myself. You should feel at least eighty. I 'm afraid you are making too much effort in order not to alarm your aunt."

"No, indeed. I 'm entirely able to be up, I assure you."

"You don't look as if you had ridden nightmares all night, either," he said, regarding her with interest.

"I dreamed of Dick once — I admit it. I was very glad to wake up," she answered, with a sunny smile.

"So you can forgive and forget?"

"Certainly — if you 'll let me."

"Oh, I understand," he nodded; "but I think it would be only civil for you to ask me a few questions first."

"I don't need to. I see your bandage. I 'm very sorry."

"Are you? Well, you look as if your grief was tempered. It 's scarcely fair for you to sit up there looking as fresh as the morning and do nothing for me."

"What could I do for you?"

"Oh — make some passes over me, perhaps," he suited the action to the word with his aching hands.

She shook her head at him brightly.

"I don't know how much you know about Science, so I can't decide just how much license to give your speech!"

He civilly veiled the sentiments that always uprose in him when he heard the sturdy name of science applied to anything so hopelessly transcendental.

"I know this about it," he said — "by the way, you should n't keep the aged and infirm standing." He sank upon the porch steps. "I have a friend at home, — an army officer. I knew he had been a sick man. I saw him stand up in one of those meetings — testimony meetings — and heard him

draw the long bow, and after him other people rose and let themselves go. I tell you if Munchausen had happened into that room that night he would have hidden his diminished head."

Frances listened attentively until the delightful voice ceased. "You knew your friend had been ill?"

"Yes, poor chap."

"Did you know he had recovered?"

"He seemed to have recovered."

"You did n't wish him to recover, then?"

Burling smiled. "Certainly I wished him to. I did n't even grudge him his fool's paradise; but of course I knew that what he claimed was impossible."

"With God all things are possible," returned the girl decidedly. "How long ago did you hear this testimony?"

"A year ago."

"Write home and ask about this friend; and if he is a strong, healthy man, don't try to explain it away. Accept the healing with gratitude. Remember that line in the Bible, 'Be still and know that I am God.'"

Burling was mute for a minute. He suddenly recognized the books on the table. One of them was a Bible. Another was "Science and Health," and the third was a little brown pamphlet.

"How long have you believed in this?" he asked at last.

"Last summer the family in which I tutored were Scientists. They pitied me on account of my

throat," wailed Miss Hereford. "And oh, my

headaches, and they advised me to read their books. I was not so unfortunate as you. From the very first I saw that this was the truth." The girl laid her hand on her treasures.

"Ah, you were caught young," said Maurice. "That is the reason."

She shook her head and her eyes looked off. "Not young enough," she replied. "The years I wasted!"

Burling felt a twinge as he watched her pure face. The years *she* had wasted!

"At any rate I congratulate you," he said after a minute, during which they were both absorbed.

A sunbeam nestled in her hair as she turned back and smiled at him.

"You may, and I thank you," she answered.

"Miss Hereford would like to meet you," said Burling after a pause. "Would it interrupt anything" — a glance at the open books — "for you to come now?"

"Not at all," said Frances with alacrity. "I had just finished the lesson. I will tell Aunt Mira where I am going."

But Aunt Mira was in conclave with her workers and could not be found; so Frances moved with Burling through one after another cool, pleasant room, until he stopped before the door of a small apartment with an unobstructed view of the Sound, where Miss Hereford always sat at this hour to read her fortnight-old "Times."

CHAPTER VII

TIMMY

THE confusion of sounds proceeding from the room made Burling hesitate to introduce a stranger. He listened in surprise.

Dudley was talking fast. Her mistress's broken voice was throwing in exclamations, and above their tones a wail was rising and falling. Maurice's knock was unnoticed, and a sharp yelp caused him to throw wide the door and step in.

"What has happened to Timmy?" he asked, while Frances paused uncertainly.

"Oh, Maurice, Maurice, Timmy has been killed!" cried Miss Hereford in frenzied tones. Her cap was awry, and tears were streaming down her cheeks as she lifted her eyes piteously from where the little dog lay convulsed.

"What is it, Dudley?" asked Burling.

"Rat poison, Mr. Burling, and I 've told Harvey a hundred times not to drop the nasty stuff about, and now he 's killed Timmy, and whatever will Miss Hereford do!" exclaimed the maid excitedly.

"And we 've poked soap down his dear little throat," wailed Miss Hereford. "And oh, my poor Timmy, forgive me for not doing you any good" —

Maurice suddenly remembered the girl he had left, and turned quickly as Miss Hereford broke into sobs, to see whether the guest had withdrawn. She was standing just inside the door, and her eyes were closed.

Burling, moved by the genuine misery of the dog's mistress, felt his heart give a leap as he saw her. "Could you," he asked, eagerly striding toward her, "would such a thing be possible?"

Frances advanced quickly and placed her hand on Miss Hereford's shoulder.

"Your little dog need n't die," she said.

The weeping woman looked up at the strange voice and words. The blonde head and blue gown formed for the moment to her an angelic vision at which she stared speechless.

"Take them both away, please," said the girl, turning to Maurice; and quickly she was left alone, Miss Hereford staring through her wet eyes until the door closed behind her. She had seen the froth on her pet's lips, she had seen the rigidity that strained his little body, and outside the door she flung herself upon Burling's shoulder.

The maid, a minute ago pale with grief and terror, was now red with astonishment. Who could this young woman be if it were not the housekeeper's niece who came yesterday? To think she should be a doctor!

"The doctor 'll want help, I should think, Mr. Burling," she suggested.

"She does n't want help, Dudley. You can go."

"I think my mistress needs me," resentfully. "Miss Hereford, shall I"—

"I will take care of Miss Hereford. I will call you a little later. You may go."

At this the woman was obliged to withdraw, though with reluctant feet.

A moan from the closed room acted upon Miss Hereford galvanically. She started away from the supporting shoulder.

"I must go in!" she said distractedly. "Who was that lovely blue creature, Maurice? Why did she send us out? Did she really say — how can she say" —

"Yes, she wanted to try to help Timmy. It 's the only chance, Aunt Eleanor; don't disturb her."

Burling led the half-resisting form down the corridor.

"I knew there were lots of lady doctors in America, — and they 're often very good at home, are n't they, Maurice? But in this lonely place, and without her hat, and so young, and just at the moment we wanted her! Oh, how sweet her face looked! How could she have happened in? What a strange place America is! Oh, it 's all like a dream! I can't lose Timmy, I can't! Maurice, whom have I left him with in his dying hour?"

"Miss Graves's niece."

Miss Hereford stiffened and recoiled. "Then she is as much a doctor as she is the President's niece. This is too much! Let me go this minute, Maurice Burling!"

Burling ground his teeth together, she hurt his wrists so severely. He dropped his hands.

"Very well. Go in there, then, if you wish to lose your dog."

It was the first time he had ever spoken roughly to the companion of his life-work, and her astonishment was so great that even at this crucial moment she stopped to look at him.

"Why, what can that girl do?"

"I don't know," brusquely. "She is a Christian Scientist. They claim to do all sorts of tricks. I saw it was all up with Timmy. She was willing to try. That 's all. I 'm not equal to a wrestling match with even a mite like you this morning, so have it your own way."

"Maurice Burling, there is a Christian Scientist in my house!" returned Miss Hereford, with the repose born of horror. For one moment her eyes turned wildly toward the closed door of the little room, as if she were minded to break into it instantly; but all had grown still within. She had not the courage to stir in its direction.

"I don't hear Timmy any longer," she said with broken softness, turning back to Burling.

"No more do I," he answered briefly.

Ten long minutes they stood there. Still no movement, no sound from the little room.

"Would n't she come out if Timmy were — were gone?" asked Miss Hereford at last tremulously.

"I don't know. I never employed a Christian Scientist. Perhaps when they fail they sail out the window on a broomstick instead of meeting the outraged family."

Burling was still waiting for his pipe. His maltreated wrists ached, and he was irritated by the recent scene of tears and pain; yet the interest of

that little room held him. He did not care to leave until the door opened.

There was a window at the end of the corridor, and beside it was a wicker seat large enough for two. Silently he led the way to it, and they both sat down.

Miss Hereford's bewildered thoughts were coming into system and order, and like a star among them shone out the fair face that had bent above her to calm her grief. She had always said, and her beloved rector had lauded her for it, that rather than harbor a Christian Scientist under her roof, she would forego the companionship of her best friend; and now here she was sitting, meekly tolerating, even eagerly hoping for the success of what she had always maintained to be blasphemous presumption. She wrung her hands together.

But this was America; and Timmy had been — perhaps even now was — dying! She shuddered.

"How did you know this girl was a Christian Scientist?" she asked in what she tried to make a severe tone. It would be so much easier to make it severe if she were sure that the little spark of life in the next room had flickered out.

"She told me so yesterday, coming home from the station."

"What do you suppose she is doing in there so long?"

"I believe they pray, don't they?" asked Burling doubtfully.

An excited catch came into Miss Hereford's throat. "Some people would n't pray for a little

dog, would they, Maurice? She had a very sweet face. She — she does n't seem real to me yet," she added piteously. "It would be rude to interrupt her, would n't it?" swallowing a sob. "I 'm sure she meant very kindly, or she would n't have spoken in the tone she did. Did you notice her tone, Maurice?"

"Yes. It struck me that her motive was pure."

"You know there are good people in every sect, and — and, she would n't stay in there if he were dead, would she now, Maurice?" The nervous catch sounded again in Miss Hereford's voice.

Suddenly Miss Graves entered the hall from an opposite door. "Oh, I 've been looking for you, Miss Hereford," she said in her sonorous tones.

Instantly the fingers of the two on the wicker divan flew to their lips. The housekeeper hesitated a minute, then advanced on tiptoe.

"What is it?" she asked softly.

Miss Hereford glanced at Burling, but he only smiled rather quizzically at the little woman whose hope even against hope was making her fingers and lips unsteady.

"I hope Mr. William has n't had an attack," said Miss Graves, as they both continued silent. The traces of tears and the tension in Miss Hereford's face indicated some serious calamity. "Not that it would n't be a mercy — a mercy — a mercy!" added Miss Miranda's swift thought.

"No," returned Miss Hereford, looking again at Burling, wistful that he should speak; but he remained mute.

"I did n't know until a few minutes ago," said Miss Hereford tremulously, "that your niece was a Christian Scientist, Miss Graves."

A pang of mortification swept through the housekeeper. This, then, was the cause of her employer's agitation. Could she blame her? It was disgrace and pain that she herself had suffered last evening when Frances had confessed her faith, and her face suffused; yet now, with strange inconsistency, she resented Miss Hereford's attitude, while a bitter impatience arose within her that her niece could so injure the family pride.

"I did n't know it myself until she arrived here, Miss Hereford," she returned stiffly. "Of course my niece won't stay under your roof one minute longer than you wish her to. At the same time," Miss Miranda's cheeks were flushing deeper under her sallow skin and her head was erect, "you being an Englishwoman and she an American, I must ask you to remember the Mayflower. She has a right to believe anything she wants to."

"Then you — do you" — asked Miss Hereford tremulously, "do you sympathize in her views?"

Miranda, in her excitement, took no note of the timidity of the question. Her black eyes snapped.

"Are you through with me if I do?" she asked, her pride and independence in arms.

"Oh, no, indeed!" exclaimed the poor little lady, overwhelmed at the thought of America minus Timmy *and* Miss Graves. "I merely asked for information," she added, still nervously listening.

"Then I can satisfy you in two words," said Miranda emphatically. "I don't. Frances is a good girl, and she seems as happy over this folderol as if she 'd found the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. My only comfort is that it can't last long with her. She comes of good New England stock, and" —

Miss Hereford shook her finger warningly at the speaker and put her head forward. "Not quite so loud, if you please, Miss Graves. I thought just then I heard something."

"Where?" asked Miranda, looking around vaguely.

Maurice Burling smiled at the empty pipe he was fondling. He had risen when Miss Graves approached. The housekeeper began to feel that there was still a mystery here. Why must she be quiet, even though her niece's fad had moved Miss Hereford to tears? That lady's following words did not explain.

"I thought I heard your niece's voice," she said.

Miss Graves stared. Why should Frances's voice be a cause for enjoining silence?

"Oh, no," she answered. "My niece must have gone to walk. She disappeared while I was talking to the cook."

"Oh, Maurice!" ejaculated Miss Hereford, turning and stretching out her little hand toward him, "indeed I thought again I heard her!"

Miss Graves looked from one to the other. What was all this? Were they crazy, or was she?

Miss Hereford could contain herself no longer. "Oh, Miss Graves, my little dog has been poisoned — my little Timmy! We left him in that room — dying!" The tears again dropped down the speaker's face.

"You did!" ejaculated Miranda. She had not been a week in this house without discovering that her employer's little countryman was the sunshine of her life. She even liked the amiable pet herself, with a sort of contemptuous good nature.

"What did you leave him for?" she asked very naturally.

"Oh, you don't suppose we would if there had been anything that anybody could do for him!" exclaimed Miss Hereford poignantly, unconscious that she was voicing the sentiment of most people when they finally seek "to the Lord" instead of "to the physicians."

"Why did n't you make him swallow something? You could have got some soap, anyway!" said the housekeeper, with repressed impatience at this supine behavior.

"We tried. Dudley and I tried. It only increased his sufferings. Ah!" The speaker pressed her hand to her hot eyes.

"But what do you mean sitting out here if he 's alive!" urged Miranda, all her practical ideas surging. "I never 'd have thought you 'd let him die alone, Miss Hereford."

"Miss Graves!" cried the little woman acutely. "How can you! Your niece is with him."

"*Frances!*" ejaculated the housekeeper, in a

very extremity of surprise. "You 've left Frances with him!"

"Yes," piteously. "She 's giving him an absent treatment. Oh, Miss Graves, I keep imagining I hear something in there!"

The housekeeper looked around instinctively for somewhere to sit down. She had a sensation which was entirely unprecedented, and therefore she did not recognize it; but it was nothing more nor less than hysteria. Indeed, she fell incontinently into the place on the divan which Mr. Burling had vacated, and sat there grappling with the idea of Frances and her patient.

"You know there was nothing else — he was dying" — pursued Miss Hereford breathlessly, "and she looked so sweet — and so sure. I shan't forget her face" — little sobs punctuated this speech — "I shan't indeed — *Oh!*"

It was not so much an exclamation as a cry, for the door of the little room opened, and both women leaped to their feet. Burling's lips fell apart eagerly as the smiling girl in the blue cotton gown came out into the hall, and in her arms lay the pug, who was licking his chops and yawning portentously.

For a minute nothing was heard but the glad cries of the dog's mistress and the endearing terms with which she overwhelmed him and Frances alike.

"It was a very bad dream he had, — a very bad dream," said the girl, half laughing gently into the pug's flat face, as she yielded him into the arms of his mistress.

"Dear child, what does it *mean*?" asked Miss Hereford at last brokenly.

"It means that God healed him."

"My dear — my dear!" The English lady's shocked suspicion of irreverence mingled amusingly with her joy.

"Why not?" asked the girl kindly. "Have you an idea that any one but God made your little dog?"

"Certainly not, of course." Miss Hereford dropped an agitated kiss on the wrinkled velvety forehead. "But it seems almost too much to ask of the Almighty, my dear, — the *Almighty*, does n't it? Only a little dog."

"It does n't seem so to me. 'Not a sparrow falleth' — don't you remember?"

"Yes, yes! Oh, Timmy!"

Dudley, whose sharp ears had been listening at a safe distance, now hastened to join the group. She seemed struck dumb at sight of the pug blinking in his mistress's arms; but recovering herself, she spoke.

"And I 've been giving Harvey such a dressing down!" she exclaimed.

"I 'm sure he richly deserved it," said Miss Hereford.

"Why, no, Miss Hereford. He said he knew he put those pieces of meat where Timmy could not possibly get them, and you see he did n't. It was just some passing sickness."

Miss Graves's hysterical temptation had passed. Her face had resumed its Revolutionary lines.

"Distemper, probably," she remarked.

She had no unkind intention toward her niece. It was only the honest expression of her thought.

"Well, we certainly had a great scare, at any rate," said Miss Hereford, "and I 'm just as much obliged to you, my dear," a grateful look at Frances, "as if Timmy had been poisoned. He seemed very sick to me."

Frances was a young Scientist, and had not yet become inured to the reluctance of thought to admit an immaterial power. Burling saw the color rise in her cheeks, though her eyes kept their steady radiance.

"Miss Hereford," she said, "do not be turned from gratitude to our Father for this proof that no life is too trifling to be preserved by His tender love. If you will ask your maid to go into the next room, there is something there which needs her attention."

She turned with her pleasant smile to Dudley, who was watching her with ready suspicion. "You will be able to show Harvey a bit of the meat he did not hide carefully enough."

Maurice Burling, walking in the grounds half an hour afterward, emptied his pipe by rapping it against the trunk of an elm-tree. His eyes were speculative.

A robin running through the grass near by lifted its head and stared at him. He nodded toward its bright eye.

"That was a very neat little miracle, if you ask me," he said confidentially.

CHAPTER VIII

THE PAGODA

Miss Graves did not lack food for thought the rest of that day. At luncheon Frances was aware that her aunt was eyeing her furtively from time to time. The episode of the morning was highly repugnant to Miss Miranda.

"In Salem days she 'd have been burned for a witch," she thought.

In spite of her generous heart, she would have much preferred that Miss Hereford should be left to mourn her pet than that Frances should assume a rôle so far removed from the family traditions. She dreaded the notoriety to which the affair might give rise among the servants; and that afternoon when Dudley came to the housekeeper on some errand, Miss Miranda gave her more than the usual passing glance.

The lady's maid was evidently still under excitement. To tell the truth, she was unreasoningly jealous of the sudden importance in the eyes of her mistress of the American girl, the niece of this housekeeper whose rights she was so often forced to respect.

Spite sparkled in Dudley's eyes as she lingered when her errand was over.

Frances was not in sight, but she would take the aunt down a peg.

"It was lucky Timmy got over his attack," she remarked. "I dare say there 's not a dog in America as well bred as Timmy."

"Should n't wonder," returned Miss Graves, with a show of nonchalance she was far from feeling.

"I told Harvey if he wanted to kill the rats he 'd have to use something a good bit stronger than the stuff he put on that meat."

"'M'h'm," responded Miss Graves, feeling as hot all over as Dudley could have desired, but maintaining an impassive demeanor.

Her reticence incited the maid to clinch the matter.

"Miss Hereford and I were quite put about for a few minutes, Timmy seemed so upset, but directly we left the room he went quite sick, and of course he came right after that. Your young woman was very kind to stay with him. I had to bring Miss Hereford away. It was too much for her nerves, don't you know."

"My niece's name is Rogers — Miss Rogers," said the housekeeper slowly, with a level look out of her eyes into Dudley's.

"Is it, indeed? Well, Miss Hereford took it very kind of her being willing to stay with Timmy while the poor dog was suffering, but of course we know now he was n't so bad as we thought."

"Law, no," said Miss Graves carelessly, secretly delighted to find that Dudley's malice took this

turn. "'All 's well that ends well,'" she added, "and I hope Timmy 'll have more sense next time."

"That 's where it is," returned the maid, mollified. "Him that 's always fed so dainty, too. After all, Mrs. Graves, pamper them as you will, a dog 's a dog, and you can't make anything else out of them."

"That 's a fact, Dudley," said Miss Miranda; and then they parted, each somewhat relieved in mind.

"'And the magicians did likewise with their enchantments,'" thought Miss Graves as she went about her work. It was a bit of Scripture she had quoted often to herself that day. It seemed to her that every hour since the afternoon in Melrose when she had come upon her niece reading the Bible, the girl had been changing into a new and quite different personality from the one Miss Miranda had known.

Frances took a walk this first afternoon of her stay at Waterview. Her thoughts as she strolled had been radiant, or so it seemed to Miss Graves from the look in the girl's face when at last she returned and entered the room where her aunt was sewing.

"It is a beautiful afternoon," she announced.

"Think so?" returned Miss Miranda, biting off her thread. "All overcast, seems to me."

"Yes, but the air is so sweet. I love these gray days."

"Well, I should think you 'd be too lame to care

very much about walking," remarked Miranda bluntly. "Come, now, Frances Rogers, ain't you lame?"

"I am, a little — not much."

"Well, I 'm glad you 'll own it."

The girl seated herself in a rocking-chair and smiled.

"You 're glad I 'm lame, then."

"Yes, I am. When folks get thrown out of carriages it 's natural they should be lame, and I 'd rather they *were*. And when dogs get poisoned I want they should *die*. It 's natural. So there!"

The girl's laugh rang out heartily. "That 's funny," she said, "but it is n't true. If you could have rubbed the lameness out of me with liniment you 'd have been delighted, would n't you?"

"Humph!" grunted Miss Graves, setting a vigorous stitch.

"If you could have cured Timmy you would not have grudged days and nights of care. You would have fought for his life for Miss Hereford's sake as hard as if he had been a baby. You can't deny it."

Miss Graves looked up from her sewing and straight at her niece over her glasses. "Frances Rogers, tell me, now we 're alone, what you gave that dog!"

The girl returned her aunt's gaze for a hesitating minute.

"But, Aunt Mira," she said at last, "you must know I don't carry around antidotes for poison in the pocket of my morning gown."

"I ask, Frances," sonorously, "what did you give that dog?"

"And I tell you," replied the girl gently, "nothing but a large dose of truth."

"Pshaw!" ejaculated Miss Graves fiercely, and resumed her sewing.

For a minute there was silence; then Frances spoke. "We hope to live together, Aunt Mira. Supposing we agree not to talk on this subject."

"I shall agree to nothing of the kind," was Miss Miranda's prompt response. "Anything on earth but a forbidden subject. Frances Rogers, have you an idea of the families Christian Science has broken up?"

"No. I have n't heard of any. I know of some it has brought together."

"Have you an idea of the wise and good men who have preached against it? I have a sermon now that I cut out of the paper before I ever thought a Graves could run so wild. It is by the Rev. Dr. D——. I 'll let you read it. In fact, I wish you to read it."

"Can he heal the sick?" asked Frances.

Miss Miranda looked up. "I don't suppose he can. I don't suppose he would try to do such a thing."

"Then no matter what he says, he does n't know enough about his subject to discuss it. We only study the Science that Christ taught, and obey him as far and fast as we can. Christian Science is n't a matter of words. It is a matter of deeds. Discussing it or preaching against it

amounts to nothing unless the preacher can come down out of the pulpit and heal the sick as Jesus Christ told him to do. Then his words will have weight; but then they will cease to be in opposition to his Master."

Miss Graves dropped her sewing, and seemed searching in vain for something to say.

"I do hate to have you *queer*, Frances," she said at last.

"But when you come to find I 'm not queer — won't that be a blessing? Aunt Mira, let us read the New Testament over again together while I 'm here. I believe you 've forgotten some of the things Jesus said and commanded."

"Read my Bible, eh?" Miss Graves gave a short laugh. "My niece tells me I 've forgotten the Gospels! Well, well! Frances, you 're my guest, and I don't want to make you uncomfortable, so I won't tell you what I think of that speech."

"Aunt Mira," the girl left her chair and came and sat on the stool at Miss Graves's feet, "you must know it is a pain to me to displease you. I have anticipated so much being with you, looked forward to our living together, and now all I can do to prove my love is to go away the minute you want me to. I did n't mean to say it so frankly, but on second thoughts I agree with you; there must be no concealment between us, not even a loving one. I will go to-morrow and not feel the least resentment if you would be relieved by my doing so. Just say the word."

Miss Miranda's face was grave and rigid as she met the entreating blue eyes.

"Frances," she said, "I did n't sleep much last night. I was thinking — thinking and thinking around in a circle, about supposing you kept on with this unreasonable superstition — how should we get on together? I got to wondering just how much you did care for me: whether you would for my sake give up this new fad. I 'm glad you 're quit of your headaches, real glad you 're so well and happy; but why can't you be just as good and well off in the church your father and mother loved? I know I have n't done so much for you the last few years as to have any great rights to be considered; but, oh, Frances, the weight it would take off my heart if you 'd just agree to come back to the safe path that 's been good enough for thousands of Christians a good deal better than you or I can ever hope to be!"

The girl's hand was on her aunt's knee. "Aunt Mira, you have done all for me that you could. I could n't feel more grateful to you if you had had quantities of money and lavished it upon me. Don't think for a minute that it is lack of love for you that makes me persist in going on instead of back. You have no idea what you are asking of me."

"Then supposing it came to a question of a break between us?" asked Miss Graves, the lines of her face hardening still more.

"I should never cease to regret it."

"You have n't anybody in the world as near to you as I am," persisted Miss Miranda. "Think

well what you 're saying, Frances. There 's no difference like a religious difference. It may sunder us in spite of ourselves. Would you cut yourself off from all kith and kin?"

"My dear Aunt Mira," replied the girl, "in a way I am not independent of you, for I love you dearly; but if I had a father and mother, brothers and sisters, besides you, and all felt that they must leave me if I held to Christian Science, it would make no difference."

Miss Graves frowned slightly, and they regarded each other during a pause.

"Now after that, I am willing to accept your verdict," said Frances.

It was a satisfaction to her aunt to observe that the sweet lips quivered.

"You 're a fanatic, then," said Miss Miranda brusquely. "There 's nothing particularly novel about being a fanatic. There have been armies of them."

Her heart was beating hard. For the moment it seemed to her good to remand the obstinate one to her life in one room and extinguish at once all hope of the coöperative life in an apartment, to which they had both looked forward. Frances's very gentleness was exasperating. Miss Graves elected to view it as a pose.

"Well, we 'll see," she said at last, vaguely.

"I can go back to-morrow," said the girl. "Shall I?"

"No, you shall not!" brusquely. "Wait a few days for the speech of people if nothing more."

So it was unsatisfactorily settled, and Miss Miranda, in spite of herself, could but admire the equable and cheerful manner in which her niece for the rest of that day made conversation about their mutual friends and acquaintances at home.

"Certainly for a young person," thought Miss Miranda, "her self-control is remarkable."

"But I 've always heard," she added mentally, "that Christian Science makes them all hard and cold, little by little."

So passed Frances's first day at Waterview. The second morning was cloudless. Miss Graves accepted her assistance in a few household duties, and then she did her reading, as before, on the porch. The sparkling water seemed to beckon through the trees, and at last she went hatless across the lawn toward a pagoda built on a little rise of ground in sight of the crested blue of the Sound. She found it inclosed on three sides, and within were a wicker table, several chairs, and a hammock. No sign of life showing in any direction, she seated herself in the netting and gazed out upon the water, speedily becoming lost in thought.

She had become so completely unconscious of the passage of time that she started at the sudden apparition of two men, who appeared to have dropped from the clouds upon the grass before her retreat. One was a servant in black clothes, who carried over his arm a heavy Scotch rug. In his hands were a couple of boxes, and his face bore an expression of supercilious endurance, his upper

lip being elevated at one side in a general disapproval of the universe. The second was taller and broader, a man in knickerbockers. A thick crop of brown wavy hair caught the sun in its lighter threads. Bold brown eyes opened wide beneath the broad brow, and the lips of the handsome mouth were loose and sullen. His brow lowered as he caught sight of Frances sitting in the hammock, her slippered feet showing below her blue gown.

Sanders well knew who she was. He had a contempt for her in advance, as the housekeeper's niece, and the opportunity to show it, while keeping rigidly within the line of his duty, was sweet.

"Mr. William's 'ammock, if you please, miss," he said insolently.

Frances's thoughts had been so far afield that for a moment all that impressed her was the amusing absurdity of a lady's being requested to relinquish her resting-place to the strapping young man before her; but as the latter's bold, cold stare awakened her consciousness, she realized the newcomer's identity, and her heart gave a little leap of apprehension as she hastily rose.

The young man still scowled. "You need n't go if you don't like," he said. "I don't want the hammock yet."

This gracious permission might amuse the visitor later on. At present she was far too uncomfortable and anxious for flight.

"Thank you, but I must go. My aunt" —

"Who are you, anyway?" demanded the youth,

planting himself in her path and scanning her blonde head and face curiously. "You are n't that giggling one who was here once."

"No, I have n't met you before," returned Frances, controlling the desire for incontinent flight. She recalled afterward that the servant regarded the scene open mouthed.

Anything approaching mental alienation had always had for her a particular horror, and all she had heard concerning this unfortunate young man seemed to receive a terrifying touch from the bigness and strength with which he towered above her.

Instinctively she attempted to pass him, and instantly he grasped her arm.

"Oh, please let me go," she said breathlessly.

"Mr. William, sir!" ejaculated the astonished Sanders.

"Hold your tongue!" exclaimed the boy, turning roughly upon him.

To the intense relief of the trio, Maurice Burling and Miss Hereford here came strolling around the side of the pagoda. Burling stared at the sight which met his eyes. Frances, very pale, was held in Billy's grasp, and the latter's scowl deepened as Maurice in his turn grasped his shoulder.

"Take your hand off her, Billy."

Billy's answer to this peremptory demand, being unconventional in the extreme, need not be recorded.

Burling knew the hopelessness of forcing him, and he saw by Frances's face that the tightening grasp was painful.

Miss Hereford comprehended the situation at once. "Here is Timmy come to see you, Billy," she said, holding up the pug.

At this the boy did drop Frances's arm to seize Timmy by his loose little hide and carelessly fling him, yelping, some distance away.

"Timmy 's a bore," he remarked coolly.

Miss Hereford gave a little shriek, and running after her pet, clasped him close to her bosom.

Meanwhile Frances, breathing freer, started to step down from the pagoda.

"Here, you!" called the young man, pointing after her as one whose slightest gesture is obeyed, "Don't go away! Sit down! I want to look at you!"

"Miss Rogers," said Burling, crimson with surprise as well as annoyance, "this is entirely unprecedented, and not only in the way you think. Will you kindly oblige us by being seated for a few moments?"

Sanders listened to the profound respect of this address, and decided that he must revise his programme somewhat.

"I 'm sure, Billy, you 're sorry you were so unkind to Timmy," said Miss Hereford in a grieved tone, as she took a seat near that into which the young autocrat had thrown himself.

"Don't bother," he replied. "What 's her name?" with a jerk of his head toward Frances, who had reluctantly sunk into a chair, behind which Burling remained standing.

"That is Miss Rogers," replied Miss Hereford,

"and Miss Rogers, this is Mr. William Hereford, my nephew and my own dear boy. You don't know, Billy, how kind Miss Rogers was to Timmy yesterday."

"Oh, cut Timmy!" He stared long and coolly at the stranger. "She 's different to that giggling one," he added at last.

Frances was still trembling, but by this time she had begun to regain her self-control.

Miss Hereford and Burling exchanged a look.

"You can come over here, girl." The young fellow beckoned. "I 'll show you my beads."

At his nonchalant words and gesture Burling stooped toward Frances's ear. "If you will be so very kind?" he said.

Reluctantly she rose and crossed to the empty chair, which the youth indicated.

"Don't be a duffer, Billy," said Burling. "Can't you stand up when a lady is coming to you?"

Upon this the tall boy swung himself lazily to his feet and placed the chair nearer his own than the girl fancied. She attempted to move it.

"Drop that," he said roughly. "It does very well as it is."

Sanders placed a couple of boxes on the table near his master's elbow. Uncovering one, a quantity of small bright beads were discovered, while the other held needles and spools of waxed thread.

"I 'll let you make yourself a ring," said Billy. "Girls are always keen for jewelry. You can keep it, too, if you like. I always break mine up by evening because it might not suit me next

morning. To-day it must be sapphires, to match the water. There 's enough for both. You can have sapphires too, if you like."

The girl's glance swept the faces of her entertainers, and what she saw there made her try to smile into the bold eyes fixed upon her. "I think I 'll take diamonds, if you don't mind. I 've never had a diamond ring."

The boy shrugged his big shoulders. "Of course you can if you like, but your gown is blue. I don't think much of your taste. Now, then, stupid," to Sanders, "hurry up with those needles! Fingers all thumbs, as usual."

"The thread seems to knot this morning, Mr. William," returned the man.

"Don't blab!"

"Keep a civil tongue in your head, youngster, can't you?" suggested Burling.

"Who wants you around here, old Maurice?" was the rough rejoinder. "You 're color-blind, anyway."

"I want him!" ejaculated Frances, in a panic of which the next instant she felt deeply ashamed.

"Humph. Well, I said you did n't have much taste," remarked Billy, proceeding to pull over the beads.

CHAPTER IX

CATCHING AT A STRAW

For some time the little group remained in the pagoda, all humoring the poor half-developed brain. The youth was delighted when Frances had difficulty in matching the size of her diamonds, and the rare sound of his laughter ringing out once or twice moistened Miss Hereford's eyes with tears.

To Frances the situation was extremely painful and embarrassing. She flushed in sympathy with her hostess at the frequent recurrence of the youth's rudeness. To be confronted with the family skeleton in the family's presence filled her with mortification, and she welcomed the completion of the rings as an excuse for retreat.

"I 'm sure I thank you very much, Mr. Hereford," she said at last, holding up her hand to admire the glass circlet.

"Oh, cut the Mister. You can call me Billy. Here, I 'll wish on your ring. Then you 'll have to keep it there, you know."

He took her hand in his, and she shrank from his grasp. Pulling off the bead circlet, he held it poised a moment, then a mischievous flash played over his handsome face.

"With this ring I thee wed," he said, and again his boyish laugh rang out gleefully.

"You 're a good sort," he added. "Perhaps when I 'm a man we shall hit it off."

"You were going to wish," said Frances, her very ears burning.

"All right. I wish that you should make rings with me every day." On went the circlet to the smooth finger. "I say, how little your hand looks," said the boy, regarding it with sudden wonder.

Burling bit his lip. "But yours is such a size, you see, Billy," he said. "Now then, let Miss Rogers go."

"Go? Not much!" retorted the boy promptly. "I 'll let you go, and Aunt Eleanor, and Sanders; Miss Rogers is going to stop here."

The determination of the tone set Frances's heart a-flutter; but she regarded her captor, and allowed her eyes to suffuse with the tears she had been long repressing.

"Do you know you hurt me holding my hand so tight?" she asked slowly.

The effect of the gentle words was magical. He gazed at her tears fascinated, and instantly released her.

"If anybody hurts you," he exclaimed in a choked voice, "I 'll kill him!"

Frances pursued her advantage. "I have come to Waterview to visit my aunt," she said in the same slow, soft voice. "She is waiting for me now at the house. I should like to go and show her my ring. May I?"

"I — I suppose so. You can tell her I gave it

to you. And I 'll give you another one some time, too."

"Thank you," returned Frances, and without other leave-taking she stepped swiftly from the pagoda, and the minute the corner was turned, fled like a fawn toward the house.

Billy returned, humming a tune and smiling, to his beads.

Miss Hereford and Burling exchanged a long look again. Sanders sniffed unostentatiously and threaded another needle.

To Frances's relief, when she reached the house she did not at once find her aunt. Hastening into the little vine-clad porch, she sat down, and leaning her elbows on the table whereon still lay her books, she opened her text-book, and resting her forehead on her hands, read and read as one who takes deep draughts.

She was humiliated, ashamed of her own recent fears and present tremors.

Before long Miss Miranda caught sight of her through a window, and coming out, observed her absorption.

Frances, feeling her gaze, looked up.

"I 've been reading that book some since you 've been gone," said Miss Graves dryly. "You 've got a hard row to hoe if you believe one quarter of what that says. It seems matter not only is n't respectable, but it is n't even real."

Frances sighed. She was in no mood for argument.

"It seems a hard saying at first; but after all,

you know, none of the wise men can decide what matter is, and you believe, don't you, that God is omnipresent?"

"Of course," returned Miss Miranda.

"What is he — spirit or matter?"

"Spirit, of course."

"What does omnipresent mean?"

"Everywhere."

"Then where is matter to come from?"

"Those are words," said Miss Graves impatiently, "and actions speak louder than words every time. I guess you 'll be willing enough to come in and eat your lunch. It 'll be ready in a few minutes."

Frances sighed again unconsciously at the familiar gibe.

"Yes, we do not awaken at once from a false sense to the expression of absolute truth. First we have the sweet assurance of this truth in the destruction of any suffering from the food we eat. We 're less dependent upon it, too, and more conscious that man lives not 'by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God;' and when we awaken in the likeness of that 'mind which was in Christ' we shall know that this mind sustains us with its own eternal ideas. Let me assure you, Aunt Mira, that we shall never get anywhere by argument about this. Have you time to sit down a minute?"

Miss Graves seated herself with an expression of face which confirmed her niece in a suddenly taken resolution.

"I can see," went on the girl, "that I made a mistake in not talking frankly to you on this subject while you were in Melrose. It would have saved us a great deal. The next best thing is for me to go back immediately. I received an invitation in this morning's mail to make a visit to the family where I tutored last summer. They have a cottage at Intervale, and they urge me very strongly."

"Oh, of course, if you 'd rather," said Miss Miranda with hasty pride. "No doubt it will be dull for you here as the guest of an employee."

The girl shook her head gravely. "You know it is n't that; but it has already begun to be painful for us both to have an important point of difference in thought rising between us, and it is liable to become more so as time goes on."

"It takes considerable money to go kiting around from pillar to post like that," remarked Miss Miranda.

"Yes, that is so, too. I 'm sure you know that if I felt I could be a comfort to you the place I should choose would be as close to you as possible; but for the present I 'm not a comfort. It looks to me quite certain that it would be better for me to go back to Boston to-morrow. You can tell Miss Hereford that I was recalled if the question comes up."

Miss Graves bit her lip undecidedly. At every turn she was being surprised by the newly developed strength exhibited by her niece. As she regarded the fair face a curious mixture of impotent anger and affection agitated her.

"Another reason for this determination has come up this morning. I should consider it cowardly to give way to it if it were the only objection to my remaining, but the main reason being what it is, this annoyance has weight too;" and Frances recounted her experience in the pagoda.

Miss Graves forgot her own wrongs and rights as she listened.

"Rough young cub!" she commented when the girl had come to an end. "He ought n't to be let loose that way. It 's a shame for you to be put through such a scene."

"Those poor people, Miss Hereford and Mr. Burling! I know they were deeply mortified, but evidently helpless."

"It is outrageous!" A protective tenderness had banished all other emotions in Miss Graves's breast. Like many another maternal instinct, hers permitted her to discipline the child of her affections, but to protest vigorously against any liberty taken by an outsider.

For a moment the young girl, who had manifested for her a regard quite undeserved in Miss Miranda's own estimation, showed in so brave a light that her aunt's heart yearned over her remorsefully. That her plan for making Frances her first consideration this summer should have had such an outcome could not reasonably be considered entirely the girl's fault, although there was still lurking in Miss Miranda's mind the sense of hurt and outrage that the young creature had dared not only to think for herself, but to hold

herself uninfluenced and untouched by the disapproval of one who in the nature of things should be her guide and leader.

"Look here, Frances," she said, after a thoughtful pause. "I don't want you should be driven away, either by me or by that young moon-calf. For my own part, I 'll agree to hold my tongue; and as for him, I 'll see if he 's going to lay hands on my niece." Miss Graves's black eyes snapped.

Frances shook her head slightly. "You could hold your tongue, no doubt, Aunt Mira, if you made up your mind to do so, but it would be harder than you think; and as you say, a forbidden subject is an embarrassment to two people who love each other. I am certain you would be happier and freer without me and my books." She laid her hand on her treasures as they lay on the table.

"I 'm not sure, Frances. You 're my dear girl, and I ain't prepared to say what I could n't swallow rather than part with you. Come in to lunch now, anyway."

Just as they were finishing the meal Dudley entered the room. The housekeeper usually read this young woman's moods by the tilt of her nose and chin. She perceived now that Dudley had come on an unsatisfactory errand.

"Miss Hereford asks if Miss Graves and her niece will come to see her in her morning-room at three o'clock."

When the housekeeper had assented and the maid had left, Miss Miranda nodded at her niece.

"An apology. You see if 't is n't. Of course

it 's only decent of her; but you 'll see, Frances, you only got into trouble this morning because you happened to drop into one of that boy's haunts. I scarce ever set eyes on him, and I would n't be surprised if you never saw him again all the time you 're here."

A slight shudder passed over the girl. "I did n't know I could be so cowardly. The combination of tyranny and strength and imbecility seemed so real that they mesmerized me."

"But Sanders is always with him."

"Sanders! I could see that even Mr. Burling would be powerless with him from a physical standpoint. He could sweep Sanders away as easily as he did Timmy. Don't contradict me, Aunt Mira, if I tell Miss Hereford this afternoon that I am going away."

"Then you don't want to stay with me, Frances." Miss Graves did not attempt to suppress the hurt that appeared in her voice. "You 'll let that rough boy scare you away."

The girl flushed. "No, I would n't. I would not yield to that; but," she met her aunt's eyes, "I must not try to live with you until you are ready for it. I came upon you with a great surprise this time. It would be fairer for me to go away and start fresh."

"You have given me a pretty stiff dose," admitted Miss Miranda, "but if I swallow it and no questions asked" —

"Ah, but you don't," said the girl, smiling sadly.

The more her niece seemed determined upon

leaving, the more unwilling Miss Graves felt to let her go.

At three o'clock they took their way to the little room which had been the scene of Timmy's sufferings. He was there now, nestled at his mistress's feet; and Mr. Burling laid down a book and rose upon their entrance.

Miss Hereford, whose lap was bright with wools, held out her hand.

"Timmy and I should both come to meet you, my dear," she said kindly, "but, as you see, he is asleep — he is very languid to-day — and I am quite weighted down with this work. Be seated, please." Mr. Burling was placing two chairs.

Miss Hereford's hands were trembling vaguely amid her skeins as she made pretense of working. It required heroism for her to speak to these American strangers, especially to her housekeeper, of the family affliction; but Maurice had convinced her that Miss Graves could not be ignored in the present interview.

Miss Hereford had not yet escaped from the glamour surrounding Frances yesterday when she suddenly appeared to her like a soothing angel of deliverance in the hour of her need.

"There 's something quite extraordinary about that girl, Maurice," she had confided to him even before this morning's experience. "She has quite an English look, don't you think, and her voice is n't screamy. Quite superior to her station, should n't you think, Maurice?"

Burling had smiled. "What are you thinking

of, Aunt Eleanor? Engaging her as a companion for Timmy? What would the rector say?"

"I 'm sure she 's a good girl," was Miss Hereford's earnest reply.

"Even though she is a Christian?" added Burling.

"Maurice," reproachfully, "be careful. Chaffing is all very well in its place."

They had had another interview, with Frances for the subject, since the episode in the pagoda, and the result of it had been this summons to the morning-room.

"Miss Graves," began the hostess, "I dare say your niece has told you that she — that she met my poor nephew this morning."

"Yes, she has. It was unfortunate she did n't know that he spends his mornings out there."

"Ah, it was fortunate!" uttered Miss Hereford devoutly. "A kind Providence directed her footsteps."

Miss Graves bridled. Where was the apology she had awaited? "I was very sorry to have her so frightened and distressed," she said bluntly.

"No more so than we were," responded Burling. "We both tender a sincere apology to Miss Rogers for the boy's rough manners, even though we cannot regret what occurred. It has given us too much occasion for thanksgiving."

"I fail to see how," said Miss Miranda. "You at least ought to have somebody with him strong enough to control him when he won't mind."

Miss Hereford winced.

"I can do so, usually," said Burling mildly. "Not to-day, I admit." He made a slight gesture with his bandaged wrist toward Frances and smiled.

"Can you ever, Mr. Burling?" she asked seriously.

"Yes, indeed. Wrestling with me is one of Billy's chief joys, and he does n't always win. You have probably heard of such a thing as the superiority of mind over matter? Billy is n't a scientific wrestler. But it is true that of late his strength is growing formidable," added Burling in a changed tone.

"You can see, Miss Rogers," Miss Hereford's lips quivered, but she went on bravely, "what a chastening we have to bear in the terrible affliction of our darling boy. He is an only child, and his mother is dead. It still seems like a bad dream from which we cannot waken, for up to the time he was twelve years of age he was as bright and normal as child could be. Then he had scarlet fever very severely. His life was barely saved, and during his convalescence he had a terrible fall, after which he was unconscious for hours. That is all we know — all the doctors know." A sob rose in the speaker's throat. "All the brain specialists we have employed are powerless to explain. They say it is a case of arrested development, and that is all they can say. The child is still twelve years of age."

"I was alone with him at the time he had the fall," said Burling.

"Why do you tell that?" asked Miss Hereford, turning upon him with astonishing fire.

"It is part of the story," returned Maurice.

"You were as little to blame as if you had been on the other side of the globe. It should never be referred to."

"But I cannot forget it," said Burling simply.

All maintained a painful silence. Even the housekeeper regretted her blunt comments.

Miss Hereford, nervously fingering her wools, looked back at Frances.

"A year ago," she went on, "our doctor advised us to bring my nephew away to an utter change of air and scene. He has been always since his illness shy and sullen and unwilling to meet strangers, and the doctor said that the sea voyage might have a good effect, and urged upon us the desirability of contact with young companions for our boy whenever we could overcome his objections. We spent last winter at the Majestic, and there were several young people who very kindly attempted to interest my nephew and to entertain him, but he repulsed every attention. You have seen that he is unmannerly — my poor darling!"

She paused, unable to go on.

"Billy's ill temper seems a part of it all," said Burling quietly. "He is very irritable, and his boorish manners have been not the least of our trials. Also they are hard to account for. To be sure, at home he spent much of his time in the stables; but another paradox is that he does not like to ride. He says it makes him dizzy. The

fall we referred to was from a horse. It is only within the last two years that my nephew's physique has been what you see it now. Up to that time his delicacy had continued such that we believed our problem might be solved any day."

Unconsciously Frances shook her head.

"Miss Graves," Burling turned courteously toward the housekeeper, "I assure you that we have a strong reason for asking you and Miss Rogers to listen to this detailed account. Shall I yield the floor now to you, Aunt Eleanor?"

"Go on, if you please, Maurice."

"It has been a paralyzing disappointment to us that with the return of our nephew's health there came no further health to the brain. As Miss Hereford said, he has always been impatient of the presence of strangers. We have tried children, young people of all ages, hoping to find in some one an attraction for him that might be a starting point for the development of greater intelligence. All in vain. A fortnight ago Miss Hereford received a visit from a Mrs. Jewett and her daughter, our next neighbors. They were so amiable and sympathetic that she was led on to tell them of our reason for being here. As my nephew was at the time out in the pagoda with his man, the young lady, Miss Jewett, kindly consented to go with me to speak with him. She is a fresh, attractive, vivacious creature, and I thought in these new surroundings Billy might be pleased to see her. The experiment was a failure. When I afterward described the mortification of

the scene to Miss Hereford, we both agreed that it should be the last; we would never subject another acquaintance to a similar annoyance."

"But you walked into it, my dear," burst forth Miss Hereford, unable longer to contain herself, and placing her hand on Frances's arm with an unutterable appeal. "Do you wonder that I say Providence directed your steps?"

Burling caught a glowing look in the girl's eyes. "Do you see," he asked, smiling, "where we are arriving?"

"I see, Mr. Burling," returned the girl, "that mysteries will never cease. Will you tell me, as much as you have heard of Christian Science, how you could refrain from trying it in this baffling case?"

Maurice Burling shrugged his shoulders and waved his hand toward Miss Hereford.

"I confess that I never even thought of it," he answered; "and if I had, there were the medical man and the rector, who think for Miss Hereford. One would have said that I needed treatment worse than Billy, and the other would have wanted to sprinkle me with holy water."

"Miss Hereford," the girl's blue eyes met those of her hostess, "what a pity that you wasted last winter, when you were in the neighborhood of such help among the Scientists!"

"My dear Miss Rogers," — the English lady was visibly embarrassed, — "I assure you that any action of that kind was entirely out of the question. I may as well tell you that I was extremely op-

posed to the ideas of that sect, so far as I knew them."

"But now," said Frances — she nodded her head toward the sleeping dog — "now that Timmy is at your feet instead of being buried in the garden, have you received any light — any change of feeling?"

"Your kindness I never can forget," responded Miss Hereford. "I shall always feel that I owe my little dog's life to you; but oh, Miss Rogers, I want to owe you a still greater debt!" Miss Hereford's hand closed tighter on the girl's arm.

"It must be quickly, then," replied Frances, discouraged by this obtuseness. "I return to Boston to-morrow."

"You go!" ejaculated the hostess and Maurice in a breath.

"Yes, I have been recalled. In the mean time anything that I can do" — She paused.

Miss Hereford seemed incapable of speech. She turned with quivering lips toward Burling.

"I very much hope, Miss Rogers, that we can dissuade you from that," he said. "You have become a person of the greatest importance to us."

Miss Miranda looked and listened, more and more amazed. She was forced to the recognition that it was some vitally transforming power which had changed her niece in one short year into the independent and courageous character which the past twenty-four hours had shown her to be. Her coolness and self-possession in the present situation revealed her in yet a new light.

Miss Miranda had been in her inmost soul much impressed with the carelessly displayed marks of wealth and power which were occasionally manifested in this household; and the present attitude of her employers toward Frances, looking so girlish as she sat there in her blue gown, aroused in Miss Graves a new respect for the niece who could maintain such an unperturbed demeanor under the circumstances.

"Then perhaps you are thinking of trying Science for Mr. Hereford," said Frances. "Let me advise you to send for an older practitioner."

"Yes," said Burling, "and have my nephew toss her into the Sound!"

"No," said Frances gravely, shaking her head. "She would take care of that."

"Oh, you don't know, my dear," said Miss Hereford eagerly. "Billy could n't abide her, whoever she was, you may be sure, and we should have such a time! Besides, we had n't thought of such a thing as trying Christian Science," declared the poor lady, for whom honesty was always the only course, whether it were really better than policy or not. "We only wanted to explain things to you so you would see what it means to us to have our poor child take a fancy to you. Why, Miss Rogers," the speaker's voice broke, "he laughed! I could hardly make you understand what it was to us to hear Billy laugh."

"Then what is it you wish?" asked Frances, her heart beginning to beat faster.

"We ask your help. You see now that it

might be the commencement of a new era for Billy to have the companionship of a young stranger whom he liked, and who might bring him new ideas. I have been so excited I could think of nothing else all day. Oh, my dear, you must not think of leaving us!"

"Miss Hereford is of course thinking only of our side," put in Burling, who naturally suspected that the girl's sudden determination to leave was occasioned by an unwillingness to risk a possibility of another meeting with their problem.

"By Jove, she must admire us!" he thought. "Her welcome is to be pitched from the cart. Next she takes charge of a poisoned dog and brings him out somehow right side up, upon which the household unites in saying there was nothing the matter with him. In another twelve hours she is subjected to fright and pain by the son of the house, and then joyously urged to remain indefinitely for a continuation of similar entertainment!

"We seem very selfish to you, no doubt, Miss Rogers," he finished aloud.

Miss Graves cleared her throat. "I 'm sure my niece and I both sympathize with you in this great trouble, but I don't see how you can ask her to subject herself to meeting Mr. William again. I think I ought to forbid it. I 'm afraid you 'll both see the day you 'll regret giving him so much liberty."

"Miss Rogers," Burling spoke again, "do you remember the obedient response the boy made to your last words in the pagoda? Of all the occur-

rences of the morning, that was the one above all impressive to me. She will tell you, Miss Graves, of that proof of control. I do not pretend to promise that there would be no inconvenience or annoyance. I know that what we ask of Miss Rogers is a very great thing, — no end of a bore for her; but this morning was like a gleam of light after nine years of darkness. If we cling to you, Miss Rogers, as drowning men to a straw, you can't blame us, though you may refuse the burden."

Miss Hereford looked from her housekeeper's stony countenance to that of the young girl, pale and thoughtful. Again she laid her appealing hand on Frances's arm.

"I know I ought to be resigned," she said brokenly, "but God has afflicted us sorely."

Frances took the hand and held it, looking into the swimming eyes. "Miss Hereford," she returned, "do you believe that your Heavenly Father has sent you this cross?"

"If I did n't, how could I bear it!" cried the other.

"Would n't you recover your nephew's mental health if you could?"

"Why, child, child," said the little woman sadly, "why do you ask such a question?"

"Because if you believe God sent the affliction, how dare you try to escape it?"

"It is a chastening for a time, perhaps for a lifetime, and it is my duty to be resigned to the will of my Father."

Frances's expression as she regarded her reminded Miss Hereford of the moment when the girl had appeared to her with the declaration that her pet need not die.

"Yes," said the girl reverently, "it is right to be resigned to the will of God; and God's will is for health, bliss, perfection. It is error to be resigned to anything less. If God sent sickness, either mental or physical, it would be wrong to try to get well. How can anybody help seeing that?"

The addition was more of a soliloquy than an address to her listener.

Miss Hereford suddenly broke down and wept. "Ah, my dear, I don't know what to say further to persuade you," she said, her handkerchief to her face. "If we were in England, I could give you money. I could make a most generous offer to pay for your time; but in America it is so easy to insult people, and one never knows what to do. We can only throw ourselves on your mercy."

The tears started to the girl's eyes also. She could see Maurice Burling's expression as he watched her, could see the gray hairs on his temples, and seemed to realize the weary years these two had worn out in the watching and care of their dear incubus, who so effectually prevented all the material prosperity of their lives from bringing them comfort.

Miss Miranda saw the softening of her child's face.

"If they 've found one person he fancies, they

will find another," she said firmly. "Don't you do it, Frances, if it 's going to scare you."

"I was frightened this morning, but it was wrong to be so. I would not allow myself to refuse on that account."

A verse of one of Mrs. Eddy's hymns floated into her mind, bringing a certain peace with it: —

> "My prayer, some daily good to do
> To Thine, for Thee;
> An off'ring pure of Love, whereto
> God leadeth me."

Still she was silent. Did these people respect and turn toward her faith, the problem would be solved; for though she felt that another and older Scientist could do the work better, she would waive that in view of the afflicted one's fancy for herself; but they did not want Science, and her teaching forbade her to apply that truth to another's thought unsolicited.

Then there was Aunt Mira.

"There are many considerations," she said at last, looking at Miss Graves.

The housekeeper read her thoughts; knew that unless she herself could refrain from being irritable and irritating, her niece's double burden would be heavy to be borne.

The scene they had just passed through had brought her to a new sense of things.

"I guess," said Miss Miranda to herself swiftly, "if they can stand a nephew that 's *non compos*, I 'd better not make a fuss about such a niece as

I've got, even if she does know such a lot of things that ain't so."

"Don't be afraid as far as I'm concerned, Frances," she remarked dryly. "I guess if we both set out to do a thing, we can do it."

Frances smiled, and with her hand still clasping Miss Hereford's, she met Burling's fixed gaze.

She reflected for a minute more before she spoke.

"I will stay," she said quietly.

CHAPTER X

A RENCONTRE

FRANCES took a walk after breakfast the following morning. Her mind had grown calm since her duty had been made plain. Moreover, Aunt Mira had dropped her attitude of defense, and in spite of the girl's shrinking from what was before her, she felt happier than at any time since she had reached Waterview.

She walked now along a road which she had learned would bring her to the water; and at one point where it was intersected by a green lane another pedestrian came into view.

This was a young woman whose red and white gown made a bright spot of color in the landscape. The bright eyes under her sailor hat glanced at Frances, then gained a gleam of recognition.

"Why, why, Miss Rogers! How odd to meet you here!" she said in surprise.

"Miss Jewett!" exclaimed Frances gladly. "I did n't dare to hope it might be you when Mr. Burling mentioned you as a neighbor here!"

"Oh, you know Mr. Burling!" The slender dark eyebrows rose. Laura Jewett had not supposed Frances likely to be acquainted with such people as those at Waterview.

"This, then, is where Mrs. Jewett's summer home is!" went on Frances, beaming. "I had the impression that I had heard it was on Long Island, but that seemed so unlikely for a Bostonian."

"Oh, but mother is a Bostonian only by marriage, you know. She is a New Yorker of the New Yorkers. She will be so glad to see you."

"And I shall be overjoyed to see her," returned Frances, as the two pursued their road together. "I have been here but a few days and it seems weeks. It will be such a joy to be again in the presence of some one who is a Christian Scientist."

"Oh, dear, are n't you enthusiastic!" said the other, with a sigh. "Mother would give anything if I could become as interested as that. Just because you and mother went through that class together I suppose you will be a sort of kin the rest of your lives!"

"But how can you help being interested?" asked Frances.

"Why, what do I need it for? I 'm perfectly well and always have been; but of course mother being healed of that dreadful dyspepsia, she just clings to Christian Science with all her might."

"And is the disappearance of dyspepsia all the difference you notice in her?"

The other shrugged her shoulders.

"No," she admitted. "I must say I have a much pleasanter home than the one I grew up in. Oh, yes, I know it 's a beautiful belief, and mother can always help me when I do have an

ache or pain. I *believe* in Christian Science so far as that goes, but — well, I 'm so busy, and it does take so much time to be a faithful Scientist."

The pleasure Frances felt in the proximity of Mrs. Jewett shone in her face. This wealthy member of the class with which she had studied had entertained its members several times after the class dispersed; but except for these meetings Frances had no acquaintance with Mrs. Jewett and her daughter, and all they knew of her was that she was an orphan preparing herself to be a public-school teacher.

Curiosity was still agitating Miss Jewett's breast as to how Frances came to be in this exclusive domain.

"Of course she is tutoring somebody," she decided swiftly. "Where are you staying?" she asked aloud.

"At Waterview."

"At Miss Hereford's!"

There was no one to tutor at Waterview. Some of Laura's astonishment escaped into her voice, and Frances recognized it. She hesitated an instant, displeased with herself to find that it was a little hard to explain.

"Dear Aunt Mira! Could I ever be ashamed of her?" she thought.

"Yes," she answered, after the scarcely perceptible pause. "My aunt, Miss Graves, is housekeeper at Waterview. I am visiting her."

"Ah!" returned the other, with a warm sensation of embarrassment. "Mother and I have

called, and oh! what a comical time we did have! Have you discovered that there is a grown nephew who is — well, foolish, I suppose, is the word?"

"Yes, I know."

"It seems," pursued the young lady, "that the situation is something like that in an old fairy story. A princess is expected to break the spell that holds this unfortunate youth, and his guardians are traveling about the world in search of her. A prince could do the work quite as well, perhaps, but it is more romantic to hold to the princess theory, — more appealing to the imagination, for he is really stunning to look upon. Have you seen him?"

"Yes, I have seen him."

"It is a pity good looks should be wasted upon such a young bear. When Mr. Burling asked me if I would see his nephew, of course I consented, for I don't believe the girl lives who could refuse anything asked of her in that voice. Did you ever hear such a voice as Mr. Burling's?"

"It is delightful."

"Well, we went to the pagoda that has such a fine view, and there was that young Hercules; not spinning — was n't it Hercules that somebody made spin for her? Well, anyway, Mr. Hereford was doing something much worse — he was stringing beads. I never saw such an absurd sight in my life; but of course I kept my countenance. He looked up as we entered and said, 'Hello, Maurice.' 'I 've brought you a visitor,' said Mr. Burling in a genial sort of a way. The young man

looked me over, and I smiled upon him in my most fetching manner. He simply went back to his needle and remarked, 'You can take her away, then.' 'Wait a bit,' said Mr. Burling, red in the face, 'she is a wonder at sorting beads. Let her sit down and help you.' It was all so absurd that I began to laugh, and young Ursa Major scowled straight into my eyes. I felt so sorry for Mr. Burling that I put on a coaxing air. 'I wish you would let me stay, Mr. Hereford,' I said in dove-like tones. 'I love to string beads.' 'Go and get some of your own, then!' he growled; 'you won't touch mine! It won't do you any good to stop here!' 'I 'm sorry you can't be more civil,' said Mr. Burling shortly, and we came away. He 's a perfect dear — Mr. Burling," went on the vivacious girl.

Delicacy bade her refrain from asking Frances's opinion of the Englishman. The housekeeper's niece had probably only seen him at a distance.

"He apologized in such a sad way, it touched my heart. He said that it was only recently that his nephew had begun to be so surly, and that never before had he been so openly rude to a strange lady. I laughed it off and told him that it was nothing, that I did n't mind the episode at all; that the fact simply was that I was n't the right princess. 'Heaven send that she comes soon, then!' he replied, so devoutly that I have thought of it a dozen times since. It is dreadfully hard for them, poor people."

"It is indeed," responded Frances.

A little silence fell between the two girls. Laura Jewett felt that the subject of the Herefords would be an awkward one to press, under the circumstances. Indeed, she was beginning to realize that such acquaintance as she did have with this girl might prove embarrassing in future. She wondered how long Frances was intending to remain at Waterview. Maurice Burling being an object of lively interest to her, she hoped the other's stay would be brief. The more she thought of it, the more vexatious it became that so strange a coincidence should occur. There was so much caste feeling among the English! She wished fervently that luck had not betrayed her into taking this walk this morning: then the necessity for recognizing the housekeeper's niece need not have occurred at all.

Laura half despised herself for the snobbish consideration; but it was dull at her home, Windermere, before the house parties began, and Maurice Burling was a rich find. She could never make an Englishman understand this social situation.

"Your dress suggests golf," said Frances, smiling at the pretty stripes.

"Yes, the links are fine here. I have played with Mr. Burling a few times." Laura decided to show Frances what her own status was with the people at Waterview. "He comes for me with the most fiery steed," she went on. "It is breathless fun to drive with Dick. I've been wondering why Mr. Burling missed yesterday at the links. It was so particularly fine, no glare of sun."

Frances's thoughts had flown to the duty that awaited her at home. "I must turn back," she said, pausing suddenly. "I am forgetting myself. Your face does remind me of so many happy times, Miss Jewett." Blue eyes met black with a wistful gaze. "Will you tell your mother the class baby can scarcely wait to see her? That is what she always called me, because I was the youngest on the list. Tell her the whole of Long Island seems pleasanter because I know she is near. Good-by."

Miss Jewett yielded her hand to Frances's pressure, and then the latter hastened away, leaving the other maiden to unpleasant reflections.

She remembered now that Miss Hereford had told her and her mother that she had secured a housekeeper who was a treasure, and who relieved her of much responsibility. She recalled the English lady's manner in speaking of her, and in fancy affixed the same tone to the mention of this housekeeper's niece, who had generously been allowed to share in her aunt's comfortable quarters.

"Mother is so much more democratic since she went into Science," reflected Laura impatiently. "She *would* take every Tom, Dick, and Harry in that class to her heart, in spite of me; but I never thought any trouble would come from Miss Rogers. She was so modest and attractive. How fate does love a practical joke sometimes!"

Had Miss Jewett followed her embarrassing acquaintance, she would have observed something astonishing. This was the fact that Maurice Bur-

ling, strolling down the road at a good pace, met Miss Rogers and turned to walk home with her.

"I happened to see you take this road," he explained, after they had exchanged greetings.

"And did you come to bring me back?" she asked, smiling.

"Not at all," he answered hastily. "I hope you don't really think that! I beg you to believe that you are still free, white, and twenty-one."

Frances had a pretty dimple in one cheek, and it showed now. "What a good guess!" she remarked.

"You 're not twenty-one, though," he returned tentatively.

"Just as you say," she answered. "I don't intend to keep count of birthdays. In Science there is no age."

"It is early for you to be afraid of birthdays."

She smiled as they walked on with swift, even steps.

"Well," he said, after the little silence, "I have n't heard you ask about my wrists this morning."

"I see you still wear the bandage."

"There is another sense besides sight that recognizes it, I 'm afraid," he remarked. "Aunt Eleanor insists upon dousing me with the most evil-smelling mixture. Just see what you might have saved me if you had only said one word for me while you were saying two for yourself that first night."

"You did n't ask me to," she answered.

"Do you need to be asked to do such a simple act of charity?"

"Decidedly."

"That is one thing I don't like about Christian Science. Its followers won't do a thing for a man unsolicited."

"Why should they?"

"Why, if they really want to do good, their ministrations ought to fall like the gentle dew of Heaven on the just and the unjust alike; but they don't merely want to do good. They want to get the credit of every cure they make."

"Dear me!" said Frances, meeting his smile with one more mirthful; "your wrists must ache this morning!"

"Have you any answer to make to the charge?" persisted the other.

"Certainly. Even our great Master did not many mighty works in some places because of their unbelief. You remember that, don't you?"

"N-no. It 's — it 's some time since I 've read the Bible — I suppose you mean the Bible, don't you?"

"Yes, I mean the Bible. I think you would have to read the Gospels before we could thoroughly understand each other on this subject."

"Oh, I know in a general way," said Burling protestingly. "Of course I do; but all that won't explain why if you believed you could help my strained wrists, you should n't do it."

"What was your reason for not asking me?"

"Oh, look here, Miss Rogers," deprecatingly.

"Did I know you well enough to demand any such service of you?"

"Do you now?" asked the girl.

Burling looked disconcerted. "Well, events have hastened our acquaintance, certainly," he answered, at last.

"Why don't you ask me, then?"

"Oh — well" — He laughed in a lenient fashion.

"I will tell you. You don't believe that I could help you."

"I 'm not sure," said Burling, recovering the pleasant courtesy of his ordinary manner. "I was immensely impressed by that experience with the dog."

"Do you believe that he had been poisoned?"

"Well," said Burling, evading this directness, "whether he had really swallowed poison or not, he was a very much done-up little pug. I never expected to see his tail curl again. To be honest, I don't know what to think about that."

Frances gave a little laugh. "I understand your position perfectly. You would like your wrists to become suddenly well and leave you free to drive and play golf, while you retain the privilege of saying that they might have recovered quickly anyway. Then, too, you would avoid humbling your pride to ask assistance of something your intellect pooh-poohs. People are usually glad to get any help or relief they can from Science if they can at the same time retain the privilege of patronizing and laughing at it."

"Whew!" Burling gave a soft whistle. "She knows how to strike from the shoulder," he remarked to the landscape.

"That 's the place to strike from, is n't it?"

They walked on again in silence.

"Miss Rogers," said her companion at last, with some formality, "it is only fair to say that the clearer view I get of where you stand, the greater becomes my appreciation of the kindness you do two unbelievers like Aunt Eleanor and myself by subjecting yourself to the humors of our charge. I wish sincerely that we could ask you in a properly confident spirit to treat Billy after your mental methods. I suppose unless we do so, you will refrain."

"Certainly. We are taught that we have no more right to enter into a person's mentality and rearrange it without his permission than we should have to go into his house and do the same thing; but the mere fact of the presence of a Scientist's thought will be of some assistance to your nephew. The knowledge of that decided me to yield to your wish that I should remain here."

"And I know how hard it is for you," responded Burling. "Miss Graves told me this morning that you had renounced a visit to the White Mountains."

"Aunt Mira need not have told that."

Burling smiled. "She wished to make us appreciate our privileges to the full, and I don't blame her; but as a matter of fact, nothing could increase our gratitude."

Frances shook her head. "It was not for the sake of the mountains that I wished to leave. It was chiefly because the faith I hold dear was so repugnant to Aunt Mira that I felt it best to go; but she is very kind to me now."

Something in these words made her companion flash at her a look of curiosity and compassion.

She surprised him with a bright smile. "And I have made a discovery. My dear Mrs. Jewett, next whom I sat in our Science class, is your neighbor here."

"Is it possible? And the fair Miss Jewett — is she also of the faith?"

"No, not entirely; not yet."

"H'm. I could n't quite fit the idea to Miss Jewett."

"Why not?"

"We-ell — she 's a gay girl," said Burling.

"Oh, you 're making a mistake. A girl is a brighter, better friend, a better all-around individual for understanding what life really is."

Maurice regarded the expressive face in a silence so protracted that Frances's cheeks flushed deeper.

"She can be a star golfer just the same, then?" he asked at last.

Frances laughed. "Starrier," she answered.

"Then I think you 'd better learn golf," he said.

CHAPTER XI

STRINGING BEADS

WHEN Frances and her escort had reached the house, the girl went to her aunt's room, promising to meet Burling later for a visit to his nephew.

Maurice immediately sought the suite of apartments where Billy was at home. The young man, to the satisfaction of his servant, objected to early rising, and it was sometimes nearly noon before his toilet was made and he was ready to begin the monotonous occupations of his day.

This morning Burling found Sanders just removing the shaving materials. Billy regarded his uncle with sombre eyes as he entered. Maurice had always been a favorite with the boy, and the visitor now noticed with uneasiness the coldness of manner which for weeks had been increasing upon his nephew.

"Good-morning, Billy," he said pleasantly.

"Get out! I don't have any good mornings," was the weary response.

"The first word 'e 's spoke, sir," remarked Sanders. "There 's no cheering 'im hup this morning, sir."

Sanders's habit was to speak of his master in his presence as unconcernedly as nurses do of the young children in their charge.

"Shut up, Sanders, or I 'll throw you out!" said the boy in the same languid tone.

"It is a good morning," said Maurice, going to the window. "What you need is a little sparring with me in the fresh air, Billy. If I only had my wrists, I 'd give you a chance to throw me."

He waited to see if his nephew would question him, but the apathetic eyes did not lighten, and the boy was dumb.

"Hello, where are your goldfish?" asked Burling, stopping to look at a large aquarium, in which there was no sign of life.

Sanders turned, started to speak, but thought better of it. He enjoyed retailing his master's peccadillos, and it was a novel experience to hesitate; but the boy had of late developed an ill temper which was teaching the man discretion.

The dull eyes followed Maurice's gaze, and a light came into them.

"That 's so," remarked the boy. "I want you to send for some more goldfish to-day."

"But where are the others?"

"I fished for them. It was n't bad."

"'E 'd only a bent pin, sir; but 'e would 'ave it," explained Sanders.

"Get out of here!" exclaimed the boy, glaring at his servant and pointing to the door.

"As soon as I 've put the room right, sir," returned Sanders respectfully, proceeding with his work.

With one stride forward the young giant grasped the astonished Sanders by the coat-collar,

and flinging him into the corridor, locked the door after him.

"Yes, I want you to send for more goldfish to-day," he repeated, coming back to where his uncle stood by the aquarium.

Burling's lips were set with a new anxiety. This was the first time the boy had offered this species of violence to his servant. Of that Burling was certain, because Sanders was sure to recount every annoyance of his position. A new era in the problem was dawning. In anticipation Maurice saw the painful necessity of curtailing his nephew's liberty; and if uncontrolled passions did not make his physical strength a menace, the doctors had hinted at melancholia as a possible outcome of his condition. With a new eagerness Burling's thought lay hold on the hope he was placing in Miss Rogers. Experience had taught him the utter futility of appeal to Billy's sense of right or propriety.

"I can give you something better than goldfishing," he said. "We will go off on a fishing expedition one of these days."

"Too much trouble," yawned the young man. "I like well enough to sit in an easy-chair and yank 'em out."

Here came a soft knock at the door, and Maurice, stepping forward, unlocked it.

Miss Hereford walked in. Her brow was corrugated, and she addressed her nephew in a gentle, coaxing voice.

"What is this, Billy dear? I found Sanders outside almost in tears."

"Confound Sanders! He 's always whining. I threw him out, and he 'd better stay there if he does n't want me to do it again."

"Why, my darling boy, you used to be so good tempered. What has come over you of late?" Miss Hereford's hand lay on his sleeve. "Won't you kiss auntie this morning?"

The tall boy carelessly threw his arm around the little woman's shoulders and looked down at her, a line between his brows. "I shall never kiss you any more," he answered, gloom in his eyes.

"But why not, precious child? That would make me very unhappy."

"It 's such a bore. That 's why."

"But you love me, don't you, Billy? You 'll always love poor Aunt Eleanor?"

He dropped his arm and gave the little woman a gentle push. "I used to love candy," he remarked reflectively. "I don't even care for that now. It 's bad enough to have to be polite to ladies. Don't ask me to love them."

"You forget sometimes to be polite to them, Billy," said Maurice quietly, placing his finger on his lips as he caught Miss Hereford's troubled eyes. "Last week when I brought Miss Jewett out to the pagoda to see you, do you remember how uncivil you were to her?"

"Oh" — The boy frowned as if trying to recall something, and looked from one to the other of his companions. "There was somebody else. I let her make a ring. Yes," his brow lighting, "I

said she might come again. She had on a blue frock." He crossed to the door in two strides and threw it open. "Sanders," he called imperiously, "don't be all day! We 're going out to the pagoda."

The same thought leaped into the minds of both the boy's guardians. Supposing the girl had refused to remain at Waterview, and the hope this new-born interest awakened was denied them?

Sanders reappeared, his nostrils dilating with a grievous sense of wrong. "I thought of staying away hall day, Mr. William, when you mistreated me like that."

"Oh, mind your business, Sanders, and your business is to mind me. That 's pretty good, eh, Maurice?" The boy showed his strong teeth in a fleeting smile.

His uncle seized the opportunity. "Only a cad flings people about as you did Sanders, you know," he remarked quietly; and the injured one gave a comforted sniff.

The boy shrugged his shoulders carelessly. "Preachy old Maurice," he retorted. "You want to look out what you say, or I 'll do the same by you some time when you don't expect it. I 'm getting big enough."

When at last the small procession formed by Billy and his aunt, followed by Sanders and the impedimenta, was moving across the grass, Burling went to the appointed spot to meet Frances, who had some sewing in her hands.

"I fear you won't make much progress on that,"

said Maurice, inspecting the white stuff she carried.

"Are you coming with me?" she asked.

"Certainly. My engaging nephew may take it into his head to swear at you, or if you happen to cross him, to run you out of the pagoda. You see I don't attempt to belittle all we are accepting from you."

"If you wish to do something else, please don't feel obliged to come. I was cowardly enough the last time, I know; but now I am forewarned and forearmed."

"Oh, I shall come. I have some influence with the young man. To be sure, it must be all moral, since you allow one of my wrists still to be stiff. The other is almost itself again." He moved it about to prove its pliability.

She met his quizzical look with a smile. "Well, I 'm ready," she said, and they started for the pagoda.

Miss Hereford was sitting there with her feet in the sunshine and her lap full of wools. As Burling and his companion entered the pavilion she greeted the girl with eager warmth, and involuntarily her eyes sought Billy for the effect upon him of the visitor, who looked fit for the springtime in her gown of green and white.

The young man rose at sight of her, and the look of interest which at first dawned on his countenance subsided.

"Where 's your blue gown?" he asked.

"In the house," replied the girl.

"Go put it on!"

"Come, Billy, come!" ejaculated Maurice. "Aunt Eleanor and I have spoiled you completely."

"Hurry!" said the boy imperiously, without removing his eyes from his visitor's face.

"Don't you like any color except blue?" asked Frances, standing still.

"I want you to make a sapphire ring to-day."

"Oh, certainly — if you have n't any emeralds."

"I have emeralds, of course; but I don't choose you to use them."

"The emerald is my birth stone. May I see them?" She approached him. "I 've always wanted an emerald ring."

"But you could n't wear it with a blue gown."

"That is true. So would n't it be a good plan for me to make it to-day, while I have a green gown on?"

Billy frowned slightly. "You 're trying to get your own way," he said suspiciously.

"But I am your guest. Should n't you naturally try to make me have a good time?"

"People always do what I want them to," he said, after a pause in which he had apparently tried to grasp her meaning.

"Then would n't you like a change?" she asked, smiling into his sombre eyes. "Would n't you like to do what somebody else wants?"

"I could knock you down with one finger," he remarked reflectively. "It takes two hands to do up Maurice."

Burling was watching him closely. The boy was never thwarted in trifles, as he had said; and he feared his irritability.

Billy clasped his hand around the girl's arm, as if undecided what to do with her.

"Do you know," she said, "I don't like people to put their hands on me."

"No more do I," he responded promptly. "Aunt Eleanor is always at it. She is always hugging me. You are n't that sort, are you?"

"No." Frances shook her head.

"And if I let you come out here and make rings with me, you won't ask me to kiss you, either?"

"Not if you will take your hand away and not touch me."

He dropped her arm.

"Do you remember," she went on, "that you said I might make a bracelet if I came out to-day?"

"It takes a good many beads. Let 's see."

He moved to take her hand to examine.

"You know it is a bargain," she said, shrinking. "You are not to touch me." She held up her wrist for inspection, and he regarded it.

"We can look, I suppose," he said, grudgingly.

She sat down near him. "Fix two needles for me, please, Sanders," she said.

"You need n't say 'please' to him; he 's got to do it anyway," explained her host.

"Long ones, please, Sanders. I am going to show Mr. William a new way to make a very pretty double band."

The boy's eyes still roved occasionally to her springlike frock with a dissatisfied look.

"When you have on the blue dress you may call me Billy," he remarked.

"Very well; I shall wear it to-morrow."

She exhibited the glass ring on her finger. "Won't a band of emeralds above that be pretty?" she asked.

Small as the triumph was, Maurice and Miss Hereford exchanged a congratulatory glance. Once having given his orders, their nephew's obstinacy would not have yielded to either of them without a tempest. Was it the thin end of the wedge?

Burling lit a pipe and smoked it, and for some time peace reigned beside the table where the bead jewelry was in process of manufacture. Miss Hereford sat near him, and her eyes constantly sought the fair head and the dark, bowed together above their work.

"A good deal to ask of her, eh?" he asked in a low voice, at last.

"She shall not lose anything by it, Maurice, I'm determined on that," was the equally low response. "We must n't hope too much, but oh, my dear, the doctors have said, have n't they" — she paused in wistful interrogation.

"They have said pretty frankly that they don't know anything in this particular instance; though they have kindly given us a choice of several possible outcomes."

Miss Hereford shuddered. "I dare say they thought it their duty to prepare us."

Burling shrugged his shoulders and emptied his pipe.

"Unless, remember," added Miss Hereford eagerly, "he could be roused to some mental interest. This is no time to forget that, Maurice."

He patted her knee, for there was painful excitement in her low voice. "No, this is no time to forget that; but don't build too much on it. We will be glad of one hour's relief. The boy is certainly having the best time he has known since we left home. I don't think I need remain?"

Miss Hereford shook her head. "I should say, certainly not. I will stay."

"I want to exercise Dick."

"But you can't drive, Maurice."

"No, I shall have to take Harvey. I am afraid to speak to Miss Rogers, lest I break the spell. I 'll just slip off for an hour."

Suiting the action to the word, Burling rose and left the pagoda, and in a short time was bowling along the country roads at an exciting pace after the young horse, whose muscles stretched themselves joyously.

Maurice had an objective point in view. He had not seen the people at Windermere since the day of Miss Jewett's mortifying visit to his nephew, so he bade Harvey drive him there.

Seeing Miss Jewett herself on the piazza, he told the man to return in half an hour, and sprang out of the cart and up the broad steps.

"Well, have you come to explain yourself?" asked the girl, welcoming him brightly. "We have missed you in your accustomed haunts."

"See this ignominious badge. Does n't it tell the story?" returned Burling, displaying his bandaged wrist as he took the seat she indicated.

"What have you done?" she cried accusingly.

"Sprained my wrist, — both of them, in fact; one of them is nearly well. I assure you I 'm finding out that a man in the country is no better than his wrists. If they are out of shape, he is nowhere."

"But it takes so long for a strain to recover. I could never wait. Why don't you try Christian Science?" The girl smiled. "I suppose you never heard of such a thing."

"Oh, yes, I have. I know a number of Scientists at home. Are you one?"

"Dear me, no! I tell mother I am too polite naturally ever to be one. You know they have to say, 'It 's a lie, it 's a lie' under their breath all the time you 're telling them that anything is the matter with you. You are acquainted with several, are you? Then you won't be shocked to hear that my mother is of that faith. If you ask her properly, she will set that wrist of yours right in a day."

"Very kind of her, I 'm sure," remarked Burling.

"Yes, indeed; if there is anything that upsets my sweet disposition, it is to try to tell any of my woes to Scientists. You see I know what that particular expression means that comes over their faces. I know that mentally they 're contradicting every one of my statements just as fast as I make

them. It would irritate anybody, don't you think so? But it is really rich to listen to the ordinary Aunty Doleful rehearsing all the aches and pains of herself and family to somebody who is a Scientist, and not suspecting what a bore she is making of herself."

Maurice nodded. "I suppose as a rule Aunty Doleful finds all that talk pass current as an interesting confidence."

"Precisely. I will say for the Scientists, though, that after you have lived among them a while it grows very distasteful to hear people 'talk sick,' as one Science child expresses it."

"Are there children in this thing?"

"I should say there are; and when they are born and bred in it the things they will say and do are very interesting. You will scarcely believe this, but it is true. A little five-year-old whom I know had been playing long and hard in a neighbor's yard one day, and the lady finally called to her: 'Edith, you had better stop and rest. You must be tired.' 'I must be what?' asked the child, running up to her. 'Tired,' repeated the lady. 'I don't know what that means,' said the child; and upon inquiry the lady found that Edith had never heard the word. 'Tired,' 'afraid,' 'sick,' are three words not in the Science child's vocabulary."

"Upon my word!" said Burling.

"Yes, indeed," went on Miss Jewett airily; "and as for spending time telling anybody that she has had sore throat, or grippe, or a headache,

a Christian Scientist would exactly as lief tell you that she picked a pocket yesterday, broke into a safe last week, and habitually indulged in profanity. Sometimes my mother does have an ailment — they call it a claim, you know — and she feels and acts as ashamed as if she had stolen sheep."

"I am astonished she should ever have an ailment," remarked Burling.

His companion met the sarcasm with a quickly pointed finger.

"No, you are not," she retorted. "If that speech were sincere, you would become a Scientist to-day. You 're not surprised that they have ailments. You 're only surprised that they get over them without medicine. So am I. Let 's give them their due. I 've got far enough myself not to fuss with doctors. It 's too slow after you 've tried this way. Mother says I use Science like a drug store; but I very seldom have anything the matter with me. How is your nephew, Mr. Burling? Don't be afraid to tell me." She laughed. "I shan't mentally contradict anything you say."

"He is always well in these days," replied Burling. "It is very kind in you to ask for him. I have n't yet forgiven myself for subjecting you to that annoying experience."

"You did entirely right," said the girl, nodding her vivacious head. "I 'm going to help you. There 'll be a lot of girls whom I know in this neighborhood after a while, and I 'm going to tell them that there is an enchanted prince living in

the pagoda at Waterview, and that an American princess is expected to break the spell. I shall tell them that he is very handsome and very rude, and I am sure they will all wish to try their effect upon him. Mother has so often referred to that day, for Miss Hereford told her the whole story while we were away."

"And I suppose Mrs. Jewett conscientiously contradicted every word," suggested Burling, smiling sadly.

"If she did, it was only because she believed it was n't hopeless," said the girl gently. "You know, Scientists think it wrong to fix limitations. Their motto is, 'All things are possible with God.' I am sorry if you have thought again of the reception your nephew gave me. He was n't to blame, poor boy. I simply was n't the right princess."

"I gave up hope that afternoon," said Burling, "and made up my mind that we should have to keep him closer, — another proof of the old saying that 'It is always darkest just before day,' for very shortly after that, and entirely by accident, the right princess met him."

"Mr. Burling! How interesting!"

"Yes. We don't know how much will come of it; but there is a young lady at our house who has taken his fancy. It means a great deal to us."

"It must. I congratulate you heartily." The bright dark eyes scintillated with curiosity. "Do describe this wonderful being."

"She is a fair-haired girl about Billy's own age — I never was good at description."

"Pretty?"

"There are so many different standards," said Burling, smiling. "My nephew seems to think so."

"I ought to have worn a flaxen wig!" mourned Miss Jewett, with a serio-comic gesture.

"You 've reason to congratulate yourself that the choice did not fall upon you. It is weary business adapting one's self to my nephew's possibilities. I don't know how long Miss Rogers will stand it."

"Miss — who?" asked the girl.

"Her name is Rogers. She is the niece of our housekeeper, Miss Graves. I understand she intends to be a teacher; but I 'm sure she never expected a pupil like her present one."

Miss Jewett's cheeks burned scarlet in her surprise and indecision.

"She will be likely to prove of importance to your family," she ventured.

"Yes, indeed. By the way, she is of your mother's faith. She is a Christian Scientist."

"And she takes your nephew as a patient?"

"Scarcely. I believe it is required that the guardians make that request."

"And have n't you? Why not?"

"The fact is" — a polite hesitation — "Miss Hereford and I have never felt leanings that way."

"What will Miss Rogers do for him, then?"

"Just what you would, had you proved the right princess, — endeavor to break the stupefying spell by her gentle and attractive companionship.

I left her with him to come here." Burling rose. "I must return and see whether our poor boy has disgraced himself."

"What a thing to happen to Frances Rogers! It will be more lucrative than tutoring," thought the girl. It was sure to transpire that the housekeeper's niece was no stranger to her. She would better speak.

"My mother will be interested to hear of this," she responded, rising. "She and Miss Rogers studied Christian Science in the same class. I was greatly surprised to meet Miss Rogers in the road this morning."

"Indeed? They will be glad to meet, then. I suppose it would be heresy to inquire after your mother's health."

"Thank you. She is well, and will be sorry to have missed your call. How handsome Dick looks this morning!" for here Harvey drove up to the steps. "Give my love to Miss Hereford," said the girl, as her visitor lifted his hat and was whirled away.

CHAPTER XII

A BROKEN BRACELET

SUCH was the celerity with which Dick traversed the intervening space that Burling, whose anxiety had risen gradually from the moment of leaving Windermere, soon had the satisfaction of discovering that the party he had left in the pagoda was still united.

Frances felt a secret relief as he sprang up the step. She had been wondering how she was to manage a parting with her rough playfellow. As Burling entered she extended her hand and exhibited the double band of green, caught together at intervals with a white bead, which encircled her wrist.

"Look at that, Maurice!" said Billy triumphantly. "I made that bracelet myself. She only managed to do this ring for me in all that time."

"Yes, is n't it pretty?" said Frances, as Miss Hereford crossed the pavilion and took her hand with expressions of admiration.

"Drop her hand now!" said the boy imperiously. "She does n't like to be touched."

Frances gave Miss Hereford's wrinkled hand a little pressure before it released her. "Now, Mr. William," she said, turning back to him, "confess you are glad I wore this green gown."

"I 'm not," he responded, with sudden and unexpected fierceness, "and I 'll teach you to do it again!" With a sudden movement he reached forward, snapped the bracelet on her wrist, and flung the beads over the floor. "Pick those up!" he said imperatively to Sanders.

"Let sleeping dogs lie," muttered that worthy, with a dark glance at Frances. "There was no need to stir 'im hup, miss," he added in an injured tone.

The young autocrat leaned back in his chair and looked with sullen defiance into Frances's astonished eyes. Burling stopped with a sign the ineffectual protest which he saw on Miss Hereford's lips. They both watched Frances, who returned the boy's gaze for a silent minute.

"I 'm sorry we can't be friends," said the girl, at last.

"We can if you 'll behave yourself," he replied. "You 've only to do everything I say."

"And why should n't you," she asked slowly, "do everything that I say?"

"Because I 'm the stronger. I could knock you down with one finger."

"Then you don't like me, after all, so I 'll go." She started to rise.

"Sit down!" he commanded. "Of course I like you. Do you suppose I 'd let you string these beads if I did n't?"

"Then don't you want me to like you?" she asked simply.

The boy cogitated. A new idea was endeavoring to be formulated in his brain.

"Everybody likes me," he returned, as a result of his reflections. It spoke volumes for the indulgent love which had surrounded his whims.

"But you are in America now. I am an American girl, and you are an English boy."

She spoke very slowly and quietly.

"American girls don't like English boys unless the boys are kind to them. You have broken my pretty bracelet and thrown it on the floor. How can I like you after that? How can I want to come out here again? I live a long way from here, and unless you are kind to me I shall want to get into the cars and go home, where you will never see me again."

"I guess you won't!" said the boy, a startled look coming into his eyes. "I'll take you to my own room and lock you up."

She shook her head slowly.

"You forget that I am an American girl. I am different. If you want me to stay here and come out in the pagoda with you every day, you ought to be so kind to me that I should want to come. When you break my bracelet and talk about knocking me down — knocking a lady down — how can I like you?"

The boy frowned at the fair face reflectively. There was no grief or sorrow in it, and so it was not akin to Aunt Eleanor's when she pleaded with him. However, it was not bright and happy as it had been ten minutes ago, and he decided to try the tactics which with Aunt Eleanor always had a magical effect.

Suddenly he rested his arms on his knees and advanced his dark face close to that of his companion. "Here — you may kiss me," he said, with resignation.

Sanders controlled a snort of amusement as he bent above the beads, and Frances shrank slightly before she said calmly, —

"You 're very good, but — American girls don't — care to."

"By Jove, you 're a good sort," declared the boy, sitting back again. "Then don't be huffy any longer."

"But you 've broken my bracelet," she persisted.

"Well, I 'll let you string it again."

"But you made that one for me. That was the reason I liked it. In America the boys and men all wait on the girls and do things for them."

"That 's the truth, Billy," put in Burling. "In America the girls are all princesses."

"Are you a princess?" asked the boy, looking straight into the blue eyes.

Frances smiled upon him. "Without a crown," she answered.

"Then we 'll make you one — yellow," he said promptly.

She shook her head sadly. "I don't care for it if the first time you get angry you are going to break it in pieces."

Sanders replaced the recovered beads on the table beside his master.

"Lunch-time, if you please, Mr. William," he said. "Will you 'ave it served 'ere, sir?"

"Yes; and I'll give you some" — to Frances — "if you won't make any more row."

"No," interposed Burling, "the princess is to be served at the house. She will see you later."

"Ho!" contemptuously. "A princess! You think I believe that guff! Are you?" to Frances. "I'll believe you if you say you are. You 're a good sort; different to old Maurice there, always preaching."

"People often say that American girls are all princesses," said Frances, rising. The boy stood too and looked down at her. "I will be your princess, if you will be kind and polite to me hereafter," she added.

"Stay here now, then. I don't choose to have you go."

"But a princess goes and comes as she wills. Besides, don't you see how much better time we shall have if you let me go when I wish and let me come when I wish? Will you invite me to lunch with you here some day? Good-by for a little while." She put out her hand, and after a minute's hesitation the young fellow took it awkwardly and loosely.

"Aunt Eleanor, you 'll sit with Billy till Sanders comes back?" asked Burling, and then he and Frances moved off toward the house, followed by the man.

"Miss Rogers, I know how tiresome this has been for you," said Maurice, low and heartily, "but you can't know — you can't — what this morning has meant to Aunt Eleanor and me. If there is a Providence that shapes our ends, it sent

you to us in the nick of time. It would be hard for you to realize how unprecedented, how difficult of accomplishment just this sort of intercourse has been hitherto. But the fatigue for you, — the strain on you, — it makes me ashamed in accepting the sacrifice."

"We can always do what is right for us to do," returned the girl in a matter of fact tone. "I shall grow used to him; but if you are counting on any effect I may have, then I must be at liberty to make suggestions as to others' treatment of your nephew."

"We shall follow them gratefully."

"Then, Sanders," turning to the man, who hastened his steps, with a suspicious glance at the girl, "I 'm sure it would be better if you did n't say anything about Mr. William in his presence. He may understand more than you realize, and it is hurtful to him, just as it is to a child."

"Very well, miss, but you 'll soon learn 'ow cantankerous 'e is, miss, and you 'll be glad to get along any way you can."

Burling felt tempted to say something peremptory, but controlled himself. It was most important to enlist the servant's interest.

"We 're hoping, Sanders, that Mr. William's mind may develop and his temper improve under the influence of this young lady, since he enjoys having her with him. You know he has been unwilling to see any one for so long."

"Hexcept me, sir. Mr. William was halways 'appy with me, sir."

"Were you happy with him when he threw you

into the hall this morning? That was the beginning of the end which the doctors prophesied, Sanders, — fits of gloom and violence alternating. Going on in that way he will in another year — or in much less time — pass beyond our power and care, and you will have to find another situation. This young lady has come to our rescue, and we must do everything in our power to aid her."

Frances turned the sunshine of her smile upon the attendant. "You are a very important factor, Sanders. I want to be sure I can count on you."

"Well, of course, miss," stammered Sanders, upon whom Burling's declarations had had an effect, "if hanything can be done for Mr. William, I 'm halways ready to do it."

"Then try to think of him precisely as if he were well. Don't treat him like a child. Don't speak of him in his presence, ever."

"Her word is law, Sanders," added Burling. "Neither you nor I wish to part with Mr. William. Our only chance of keeping him with us lies with this lady, I believe."

"They don't like to say so," said Sanders to Dudley later, "but that young woman is some kind of a witch-doctor, you mark my words. They hexpect she 's going to cure Mr. William the same way she did Timmy. She 's a princess, she is, Dudley, and we 're hall hunder 'er horders!"

The maid's eyes snapped, and her lip curled. "Set a beggar on horseback!" she returned. "I 'd like to see her order me."

"Very likely you will, Miss Dudley, and let me

tell you," with a knowing nod and wink, "you 'd better step lively when she does. She 's the top o' the 'eap now, as sure as you 're a foot 'igh!"

Miss Graves had been obliged to exercise considerable self-control this morning to go about her work; and when finally she saw Mr. Burling part with her niece on the leafy side porch, she awaited her entrance with a countenance all the more immobile for the anxiety that filled her.

"How 'd you get along?" she asked as Frances came in.

"All right."

"You look sort of tuckered."

The girl smiled and raised her eyebrows. "It is quite the most tuckering thing I 've ever tried. I don't suppose there is anything to be afraid of," she added, as if to herself, "even to sense."

Miss Miranda noted the expression and understood it somewhat, as she had been making further furtive excursions into her niece's text-book.

"I should think it was pretty good sense to be afraid of him," she retorted dryly, "or to be on your guard, anyway. No telling what a fool's going to do, ever."

"But we 're not going to think of him as a fool any longer," said the girl firmly. "You must help me, Aunt Mira, won't you? You must n't speak of him or think of him that way."

"I don't know what difference it makes what I think."

"If everybody thinks of him and talks of him as weak minded, it holds him back. It holds a

law over him, a mortal mind law, opposed to the divine law of health."

"That 's all right," said Miss Graves shortly. "I forbid you, Frances Rogers, ever to be alone with him. Do you hear? I 've been on pins and needles this whole morning trying to do my work with one eye on that pagoda, watching to see if the folks came away and left you. I saw Mr. Burling drive off, and I tell you if the others had set foot outside that place, young Nincompoop would have seen me come flying."

Frances laughed and seated herself at the waiting lunch-table. "You certainly were very patient and good; but never worry again. Miss Hereford and Mr. Burling are people of such fine feeling. They are as kind and considerate of me as if I were their boy's own sister."

"Humph! They 'd better be. A nice way to ask you to spend your time — sitting out there by the hour with that" — Miss Graves repressed the obnoxious word at a look from her niece — "that unfortunate creature."

"Supposing, though, that I could — as they seem to think really possible — give him a new start? Ah, Aunt Mira, if they only knew about Science, and wanted it!"

"Humph! What have you been doing out there?"

"Stringing beads."

Miss Graves laughed grimly. "What 'd you make?"

"A ring for Mr. William, — a charming double band of garnets."

"What was he doing?"

"Making me a bracelet."

"Where is it?"

"He broke it afterward."

Miss Graves noted the hesitation and looked up alertly.

"There it is, you see. He 's got the temper of the old Harry. Frances Rogers, did you hear me? If you don't promise me you won't be alone one minute with that — boy, I 'll send you back to Boston to-morrow! My hair 'd turn white in a week — I could n't stand it. I came down here to keep house, and not a fool asylum. I ain't fitted for it. I 've thought out a number of things this morning, and the only way I can consent for you to oblige these folks is by your promising."

"They feel the same way, I 'm sure," returned Frances earnestly. "I 'm sure they would n't allow" —

"We don't know anything about that. What are you to them? Do — you — promise?"

Miss Graves thrust her Revolutionary nose and chin toward her niece.

"Yes, Aunt Mira, I 'll do my best."

"Your best means to run like a deer if you find yourself alone with him by any accident."

"But after a while you will release me from that promise?"

"We 'll see about that," returned Miss Miranda, going on with her dinner.

"I 've made such a delightful discovery, Aunt Mira!" The girl's face grew suddenly radiant.

"There is a Scientist in this neighborhood, — one whom I studied with. I shall see her."

An unexplained pang seized Miss Miranda. She regarded the expressive face silently.

"She is a Mrs. Jewett, and she and her daughter have called here. I wonder if you saw them? They are both decided brunettes, and the mother looks almost as young as the daughter."

"How should I see anybody who called here?" returned Miss Graves. "I don't tend the door, you know," she added dryly.

"Dear Aunt Mira!" exclaimed the girl.

"Is n't it goin' to be kind of awkward for you receiving company in the housekeeper's rooms? Or do you calculate to have the run of the house now you 're nursing the feeble minded? Dear knows I wish he was feeble bodied, too!"

Frances colored. She felt humiliated at the remembrance of her hesitation with Laura Jewett in the morning.

Miss Graves went on rather dismally: "I don't know how much of a mess I 've made bringin' you down here, Frances. Just now it seems all mess."

"You may be sure it is n't," returned the girl earnestly. "God has been leading us, every step, and we will watch to see what he is bringing us to."

"I must say, Frances," remarked Miss Miranda, "that I never heard any one quite so free with her Creator's name as you are. It strikes me queer to hear you mention it so easily, — just as if you were speakin' of an intimate friend."

"I am," answered the girl simply.

CHAPTER XIII

AN AFTERNOON CALL

LAURA JEWETT, after Burling's departure, awaited her mother's return with impatience; and when she saw the phaeton approaching she stood at the head of the steps and took bodily possession of the parent, who, as Frances had said, looked as if she might be her sister.

"He has strained his wrists is the reason," she said, leading Mrs. Jewett toward the armchairs and rugs at one end of the porch.

"What he, my dear?"

"The only one within miles."

"Oh — Mr. Burling."

"Yes. Have n't you heard me wailing because he has n't been at the links for days? Have n't you noticed the diminuendo of my interest in the royal game?"

"Well, dear child, the season is opening now. You will soon have plenty of companions."

Mrs. Jewett took off her sailor hat and smoothed back the flying locks of her dark hair, regarding her daughter's face, which seemed expressive of news.

"Has he been here this morning — Mr. Burling?"

"Yes, but that is n't the beginning of the story."

"I thought there was a story," said the other.

"I went to walk this morning, and was tripping along the country lanes in my fresh print gown, like the heroine of a summer novel, listening to the birds and wondering where Mr. Burling was, when I met a friend — not one of mine, one of yours — most unexpectedly."

"Who was it?"

"I did n't mean to tell you. I had made up my mind not to say one word about it; but after Mr. Burling's visit I saw that I must. You 'd find out, anyway."

"What do you mean, Laura?"

"It all comes of your studying Christian Science. I must say I did n't relish the idea of going in at the back door when I visited Waterview."

"Who can you mean, child?"

"Do you remember Miss Hereford's telling you about her Yankee housekeeper?"

"Yes, and your telling her that you were a Yankee, too. I forget whether she mentioned her housekeeper's name."

"Miss Graves."

"But I don't know any Miss Graves."

"Perhaps not; but you 're likely to. Her niece is Miss Rogers, the class baby, as you called her, whom you invited to the house with the others. I met her this morning, and she told me that she was visiting her aunt, and I foresaw how you would fall on her neck the minute you heard of it, and would never think anything about the social side of the situation, and how surprised Miss Hereford" —

"Laura!" exclaimed Mrs. Jewett, her eyes shining. "Is Frances Rogers down here?"

"That 's exactly the way I knew you 'd look," said the girl.

"She is very unusual in her understanding. Our teacher told me so. Oh, Laura, how I wish you would see all you can of her!"

"Oh, mother, how I wish you would consider conventionality a little bit! I can't call at the front door to see Miss Hereford and then go around to the back door to see Miss Graves, can I? You know how English people feel about servants. It is the most unfortunate, annoying thing!"

"Laura, my dear, Jesus was born in a stable and bred to the trade of a carpenter. All class differences will have to be lost sight of except those that separate good from evil. But why did Mr. Burling's visit decide you to tell me that Miss Rogers was here?"

"Why, it seems that the unfortunate young man, his nephew, who would none of me — you remember I told you about it — will tolerate the presence of this girl, so she is to be allowed in the front of the house; for they have been a long time searching for some companion of his own age. It 's a lucky happening for her."

"It is a wonderful happening for him." Mrs. Jewett's face showed the earnestness of her thought. "I wonder if they know — those people?"

Laura shrugged her shoulders. "Well, it is going to make it a little easier for us. Mother, I wish you would come down to earth and realize

that it would be well to convey to Miss Hereford the fact that Miss Graves is not your bosom friend."

"There has n't a day passed since we were at Waterview, Laura, that I have n't thought of that little Englishwoman, — her heavy cross, and her dense ignorance. I mentioned Science to her then, but she brushed it aside, calling it 'that wicked superstition,' and I 've just yearned over them all, wearing out their lives under such a load without trying the one hope of lifting it. What must that young girl feel — that dear child Frances, confronted with such a situation! I can scarcely wait to see her."

"I knew it!" remarked Laura resignedly. "Mother Jewett, listen to me. At least let Miss Rogers come to see you first."

"How can she? How is she to command horses and carriages?"

"She was halfway here this morning."

"But did she know it? Did you tell her the way? I hope you did."

"Indeed, I did not; and I assure you I hoped she would never find it. It was hoping against hope, however, for she sent messages to you, looking radiant. Oh, you 're both just as bad as the early Christians!" groaned the girl.

"She did n't notice your coldness, I hope, Laura?"

"There was n't any. I was so embarrassed, I think I was rather effusive."

"That is well," Mrs. Jewett gave a little nod,

"for the lions in your path will change to kittens, and you will discover what a silly little child you are. I must see Miss Rogers this afternoon."

"Then I will drive you over," declared her daughter with decision. "I shall be there on your first visit to heal breaks and repair damages as fast as you make them."

When they reached Waterview they found Mr. Burling watching the paces of a handsome gray horse which was being walked up and down the drive.

"Dick's days are numbered," he explained, as he assisted the ladies to dismount.

"Oh, you are n't going to part with Dick!" said Miss Jewett. "It is as much fun as tobogganing to drive with Dick."

"Yes, but with the same drawbacks. Walking back is the dull part of tobogganing, is n't it?"

"What has poor Dick done?"

"Well, the last thing he has done is to be sold. I 've just sold him."

"Very well; I shall always mourn him," declared the young woman. Her dark eyes glanced about restlessly.

"Don't let us detain you, Mr. Burling," said Mrs. Jewett. "I have come this afternoon hoping to see a young friend of mine who is here — Miss Rogers. If Miss Hereford is lying down or engaged, we need not disturb her."

"No, indeed. Aunt Eleanor's life is monotonous. She welcomes visitors. I will send for her at once and for Miss Rogers."

The ladies entered the house. A servant was dispatched for the hostess, and Mr. Burling returned to the group of men who were awaiting him.

"Oh, mother, this is so queer!" said Laura, as they seated themselves. "I 'm glad I could explain as much as I did to Mr. Burling this morning! Here comes Timmy. I hear his bells."

At once the little pug ran into the room, followed by his mistress, who gave the ladies a cordial welcome and smiled upon Laura as she lifted the dog into her lap.

"It is n't every one he 'll let do that," said Miss Hereford, and went on to give a history of Timmy's predilections and peculiarities, through the whole of which Mrs. Jewett strained her ears to listen for another step.

"I take him for a walk every day, or he 'd never go. He can't bear to be away from me, and Mr. Burling says it is a fortunate thing, for I don't care much for walking and I suffer so much from dyspepsia I should probably be much worse if it were n't for having to take Timmy out."

"I suppose you drive every day?" said Laura.

"I shall drive more hereafter. Of the only driving horses we 've had here, one was too wild and the other too tame. Mr. Burling thinks he has found an excellent animal. He is trying him now."

"Did any one say to you," asked Mrs. Jewett, "that I should like to see the young girl who is staying here — Miss Rogers?"

"Mr. Burling told me at luncheon that you

knew Miss Rogers. I'm sure she will be very pleased that you asked to see her. I don't know whether she has been spoken to."

Miss Hereford rang a bell, and the cheeks of her younger guest flushed. At the same moment Mrs. Jewett discerned Frances herself crossing the lawn a short distance from the house.

"If you will allow me, Miss Hereford," she said, rising suddenly, "there goes Miss Rogers now. I will join her for a few minutes and leave Laura with you. I will return shortly."

There was a murmur of assent, and then Miss Hereford and her young guest found themselves alone.

"My mother and Miss Rogers pursued a course of study together last autumn," said Laura, trying to smooth the wrinkles out of Timmy's forehead as he lay in her lap. "She was a student in Boston, and that is all we know of her; but my mother entertained her whole class a few times, and Miss Rogers among them. We knew none of her family and nothing about her home life."

"Ah, that is the way you do things in America," returned Miss Hereford thoughtfully. "Each person stands or falls on his own merits."

"Ah well, some of us do. There are many differing ways of managing social life in America."

"I suppose so," returned the English lady vaguely. "Well, Miss Rogers is one who could stand on her own merits."

"My mother thinks very highly of her," returned Laura, her eyes on the dog's ears.

"They believe alike," said Miss Hereford in a lowered voice. "So Mr. Burling tells me, and he also tells me that you are not of the sect."

"I confess I am not."

"What church do you attend?"

"The Episcopalian, except when I go with mother."

"That is right, my dear, that is right. It is *the* Church. I have a friend at home who assured me that she was cured of a dyspepsia like mine by these Science people. I told her I would keep my dyspepsia. Of course it is an inconvenient and painful trouble to have, but one thing you can say for dyspepsia — it is thoroughly respectable."

Laura smiled. "My mother was healed wonderfully. There is no doubt of it. Why, they even help sick animals."

Miss Hereford stirred uncomfortably in her chair and looked at Timmy.

"But one can't cast loose from all moorings, can one?" she said a little sharply as she sat up with a sudden stiffness.

Meanwhile Mrs. Jewett had hastened away to Frances, who, when she saw the visitor coming, turned to meet her, her cheeks flushing with happiness. With a simultaneous movement each held out both hands, and they stood long looking into each other's eyes as their hands clasped.

"How very kind of you to come so soon!" said the girl.

"I could n't wait. You have been led into a strange position, my child."

"And what a help it is to see you!" responded Frances, "to speak with one who understands."

"You have no sympathy here, then?"

"No. My dear Orthodox aunt is pained by my faith. These kind English people smile at it."

"Yet they are much excited over the effect you have over the nephew, — or my daughter gathered as much from a few words she had with Mr. Burling this morning."

"Yes, it is so. How gladly I would escape this experience, since they do not desire the truth."

"Yet you cannot escape it, Frances." Mrs. Jewett had never called the girl by her name before; but neither thought of that.

"No, it must be my work. Of course I take an interest. No one could avoid longing to help these poor people; but their thought is so wrong, and the boy is so big and strong, and sometimes has such a strange light in his eyes."

"I know. I've thought it all over and over since morning; but you know how to protect yourself, and you will always be taken care of while you are doing your duty."

"Of that I am sure; and I can realize the truth about him for myself every hour in the day. I must do that in order to be strong enough to stay with him."

"And he will feel the help of it, and it may come that his aunt and uncle will appreciate that there is a power at work beyond a girl's personal influence."

Frances shook her head slightly. "The little

dog, Miss Hereford's pet, was healed of a deadly attack the day after I arrived."

"And what did they think?"

Frances smiled into the other's eager face. "Your daughter is not a Christian Scientist, Mrs. Jewett."

"Yes, I know. It is the old story." The lady sighed. "Though one rose from the dead, there would be found some way to explain the phenomenon; but I live in hopes about Laura. She saw my healing and credited it. She would not have me give up my faith for anything in the world. You are in a hard place, Frances, but you will stand, I know, and I will help you all I can. We are both young in Science, and you are young in fact, and I feel like carrying you off in my arms from so much opposing thought; but the claim of difficulty must be met."

"And of course I am in the midst of much kindness, too," said the girl. "My aunt is very fond of me, and as for Miss Hereford and Mr. Burling, they cling to me in their desperate strait."

Mrs. Jewett nodded, putting the fact away in her memory for her daughter's benefit. "I should like to meet your aunt. Can she see me?"

"Certainly. She is always to be found sewing at this time of day either on her porch or in her sitting-room. Our rooms are very pleasant here."

Frances turned back with her companion, and Laura Jewett, sitting up in her correct summer driving costume, patting Timmy and talking to

his dumpy but patrician mistress, felt a gentle perspiration break out upon her as the apparition of her mother, deep in converse with the housekeeper's niece, passed the window and moved toward the back of the house.

"She 's doing it!" she thought. "She is on her way to the back door."

As a fortunate diversion, Mr. Burling now came into the room.

"Well, the bargain is made," he announced. "Next time I drive you to the golf links, Miss Jewett, I shall be more certain of restoring you to your mother's arms again."

"But I was n't afraid of Dick," she responded, as coquettishly as might be, considering that one half her thought was busy with the embarrassing occurrences at the back of the house.

"Well," answered Burling, with the smile which Laura had described in a letter to a girl at home as "perfectly dear," "I think that was a case where discretion was the better part of valor. Dick is n't all he was reported to be, and I 've sold him to a medical gentleman who can get all his bones set for nothing."

"Ah!" exclaimed Laura, with a quick, perceptive look at the bandaged wrist with which Burling gestured. "Did Dick do that?"

"His wrist, do you mean, my dear?" asked Miss Hereford solemnly. "Indeed, he got that strain — and an ugly one it is — on that golf course, and I hope it will be a lesson to him."

Burling glanced at the visitor with a quick

movement of his eyebrows, which changed her sudden laugh into a cough.

"Yes, Miss Hereford, there are plenty of dangers on the golf links, and the better one plays, the more respect he has for those little bullet balls flying about in all directions."

"I 'm glad you see it so, Miss Jewett," said Miss Hereford.

"She is wise beyond her years — this young lady," remarked Burling. "By the way, why has Mrs. Jewett disappeared?"

"She went to meet Miss Rogers," said Miss Hereford. "I think they must be strolling."

"I hear that your nephew looks with favor upon the newcomer," said Laura hastily to her hostess, the direction of her mother's stroll still uppermost in her mind.

"Yes. We are feeling very happy over it," returned Miss Hereford, with some formality. "Any event which can brighten our boy's life is of great importance to Mr. Burling and me. I have never thanked you for your kindness in attempting to speak with him."

"That was nothing," returned the visitor graciously. "Perhaps, after he has become accustomed to one girl, he will grow more kindly inclined to others. Possibly we should get on better another time."

Miss Hereford regarded the speaker gratefully. "You are very kind," she answered.

In a few minutes Mrs. Jewett reëntered the room alone. A color glowed in either cheek, and

her eyes shone. While tea was served she smoothed and patted the little dog in her daughter's lap, and as she talked with Miss Hereford she often lifted the pug's chin and looked into the vacuous face with its big eyes.

"How much they both seemed to admire Timmy!" said the hostess, wreathed in smiles, when the visitors had taken their departure.

"Mrs. Jewett would admire anything that had been cured as Timmy was the other day," remarked Burling.

"Do you suppose Miss Rogers told her?" asked Miss Hereford, the fond pride dying out of her face.

"I certainly do; and I 'm mind reader enough to suppose more than that. There was n't a line in Mrs. Jewett's speaking countenance that did n't reveal her opinion of us."

"Explain yourself, Maurice." Miss Hereford drew herself up.

"Have we asked Miss Rogers to try the same sort of healing effect on our boy that she did on the dog?"

"You know we have not."

Maurice nodded. "So you can judge as well as I can what Mrs. Jewett thinks of us."

"Really, Maurice," Miss Hereford's tone and attitude suddenly recalled the fact that there were great ladies among her ancestors, "do you think an American stranger like Mrs. Jewett presumes to criticise us?"

"No. I believe she thinks us below criticism," returned Burling pleasantly.

CHAPTER XIV

A HOSPITAL

THE smile and kind words which Frances had bestowed on Sanders had affected that individual in the American girl's favor more than he would have dared to admit to Dudley, with whom he had an alliance offensive and defensive. He still had his suspicions of the stranger, and some jealousy of her; but many events in his relations with his charge the past week had verified Mr. Burling's declarations, so it was with some curiosity and anticipation that the attendant looked forward to the next interview between Mr. William and the guest.

It was the young man's habit to doze the greater part of the afternoon, and he rarely mentioned any occurrence of a bygone day.

The morning following the events of the last chapter, Sanders came into his master's room with the mechanical "Good-morning," which usually went unnoticed.

After his bath the boy sometimes talked, but more often was silent, his sombre eyes looking listlessly from the window, until Sanders was ready to escort him out of doors.

Others besides the servant were wondering this morning, and more eagerly, whether the second

interview which Billy had had with his new companion had made any deeper impression upon his memory. Mr. Burling came to the room, smoking his pipe, when the boy's breakfast was finished. He entered with his usual kindly greeting, and such was his surprise and pleasure at the fact that Billy stretched out a lazy hand to him, that he bore the pain the strong grasp gave his wrist without a wince.

"Good-morning, Maurice," was his nephew's response. "I 'm glad the sun shines. I 'm going out to see the princess."

"It 's the third time 'e 's spoke of her, sir," remarked Sanders.

Burling looked at the man with no change of countenance. "You 're forgetting orders," he said.

The man sniffed. "I thought you 'd be pleased to 'ear it, sir."

"Very well; but the business of all of us is to obey the princess. Don't forget again."

"Is she out in the pagoda?" asked the boy with interest. "Don't be all day, Sanders."

"No, she is n't out there yet. Her aunt is ill this morning. The princess has her hands full. I fancy she is ordering our dinner."

Billy tossed his head imperiously. "Let somebody else do it, then. I want her."

"Yes, very soon, old fellow," said Maurice pacifically. "Aunt Eleanor is ill, too, this morning. We have a hospital. Her ward is the next one I must visit, so *au revoir*. I 'll come out to the pagoda after a bit. It 's a glorious morning."

Miss Graves had indeed succumbed to the headache against which even her strong will was powerless. She found a capable help in Frances, who took and carried out her feebly-voiced instructions and insured the smooth service of the next three meals.

This anxiety relieved, Miss Miranda's thoughts ran on her own pain. Her niece drew near the bed.

"You know I would be glad to help you if you 'd like me to, Aunt Mira," she said softly. She had shaded the windows and moved with a sympathetic noiselessness which Miss Miranda appreciated.

"She has n't forgotten how it feels, anyway," she reflected. "You could n't help these old stagers, child," she groaned. "Nothing does any more. I 've given up every powder and pill that ever I took. I 've worked 'em all out."

"So far, so good," rejoined the girl.

"I 'm sure she could go ahead now and try if she wanted to," thought Miss Miranda. "I 've told her I ain't taking any medicine."

"I suppose you 'd rather I left you alone," said Frances. "If you can get to sleep it will be a relief. Is there anything at all I can do, Aunt Mira? Do you like your head bathed with cologne? I used to."

"No," returned Miss Graves shortly. "Might as well pour water on a duck's back."

"Then good-by, you dear. I hope you 'll get to sleep." The door closed softly, and Miss Graves was alone. Her pulses beat a little faster and the pain pounded the harder in her temples.

"Well, that may be Christian, but I can't see it," she thought. "I have n't an idea she could do me a bit of good; but would n't anybody think she 'd have wanted to try? She 's got rid of her own headaches, and she can see me lay here and suffer! I would n't even have water on, so 's to give her a fair chance; but if she won't take it, I suppose I 'll have to do for myself the best I can."

The sufferer rose from the bed and groped for a large handkerchief and saturated it. Just as she was binding it about her head, the door opened gently and Frances reappeared.

"Are you up, Aunt Mira? I forgot my book, and I knew you would n't be asleep yet. Can't I tie that?"

Her deft fingers secured the handkerchief. "You know how glad I 'll be to give you a treatment whenever you want it," she added.

"You want to make me ask for it, do you?" with feeble sharpness. "Dreadful afraid you would n't get the credit if the headache should go off and I did n't know how it went!"

"I have n't any right to influence you silently and mentally without your permission, — without your desire, in fact. Do you want to see if I can drive off the pain?"

A sudden twist of the torturer made Miss Graves wince; but it would signify so much were she to request the aid of Christian Science that her consistency won the brief struggle. "I don't believe in it," she said shortly, "and you know it. Now

if you won't come in and out of that door, perhaps I can get some rest.

"I guess I was real ugly," she thought with a groan when the door had closed. "Miss Hereford 's laid up, too, and that good young one has been a real help this morning."

Frances understood her aunt's struggle. Moving out into the corridor, she met Dudley.

"Miss Hereford's compliments, miss, and would you step to her room."

The maid's automatic manner and tone had grown familiar to Frances. She was aware that Dudley resented her anomalous position in the household.

She followed the woman at once, and upon reaching Miss Hereford's room found that lady sitting up in an easy chair, a shawl over her dressing-gown. Timmy was nestled in her lap.

"My dear, come in." Miss Hereford's invitation was punctuated with a sneeze, and her little nose was red. "I 'm so put about to hear that Miss Graves is ill. I wanted to learn what the trouble is."

Maurice Burling was present, and Frances greeted him as she took the offered chair near her hostess.

"Nothing but a headache, and that is quite enough," answered the girl.

"Harvey has ridden off for the doctor for me, and I thought Miss Graves might like to see him too," went on Miss Hereford.

"My aunt was just telling me that she has ex-

hausted medicine for her headaches. I am sure she will not wish to see the doctor."

"Has she been taking some of your medicine?" asked Burling, with a smile.

The girl shook her head. "No, she is n't ready for it yet."

"I think we had better let the doctor see her, don't you, Miss Rogers, as long as he is here?"

Frances smiled. "You know what I think," she answered.

"Well — I mean, my dear," added Miss Hereford, with some embarrassment and another sneeze, "so long as she is n't a believer with you. Dear me," another sneeze, "I think I must have got a chill on my liver! Then, of course, the doctor must see Billy," she added.

"What for?" asked Frances, suddenly grave.

"Well, my dear, so long as he is here, you know. This one has n't seen him."

"And he should not see him," responded Frances bravely. She could feel Burling's eyes upon her, and it cost her something to speak. "Have you faith left in doctors for him? Have n't you tried them long enough? You have had the opinion of specialists here, I suppose, as well as in your own country?"

"Yes," answered Miss Hereford. "We 'd a very great man from — where was it again, Maurice — a place with a long name?"

"Philadelphia," said Burling.

"Yes, that was it; but, my dear Miss Rogers, you must excuse our differing with you. That was

understood, I thought, and when a doctor is right here in the house " —

" But every one who sees him makes our task harder," said Frances. " Every new mind brought to make laws about the difficulty of his case is a cruel wrong to him."

" My dear, I don't understand you," said Miss Hereford, disturbed by the suddenly decisive tone.

" And I doubt if we ever should, Aunt Eleanor," put in Burling. " I think it is time that " — He went no further, for at this juncture there was a scurrying of heavy feet in the corridor, some evident altercation, then the door was burst open, and six feet of wrathful manhood strode into the room, followed by Sanders, one hand clasped pathetically to his eye.

" Your pardon, Miss 'Ereford," he stammered breathlessly, " for I knew you was hill, and I tried to keep 'im hout ! "

" My darling child ! " ejaculated the invalid, trembling under the angry frown, and instinctively hiding Timmy under her shawl. " Did he come to see poor sick Aunt Eleanor ? "

Maurice hastily advanced and placed himself before the young fellow, his hand on Billy's shoulder.

It was one of the boy's peculiarities to prefer to remain in certain familiar spots. They had rarely been able to tempt him from his own haunts, and few apparitions could have been more startling to both uncle and aunt than this of the poor youth, transformed out of his usual lethargy, and seeking

them here. He was evidently laboring under great excitement, and he brushed Maurice aside with an ease which astonished that sturdy Englishman.

"I want the princess," announced the young fellow, his nostrils dilating in his heavy breathing.

Miss Hereford cowered back in her chair, and even her little reddened nose grew pale under his wild look.

Burling, flushed of face, regained his balance and turned back to the intruder; but Frances had risen, and he controlled himself and waited.

The girl met the glowing, frowning eyes with an unsmiling look.

"You 've kept me waiting!" said the boy accusingly.

"Is n't that quite right?" she asked — "for a princess?" Then she smiled at him and drew a step nearer, while he stood motionless, still breathing fast. "I have done one thing you don't like, for I 've kept you waiting; but you have done two things I don't like. One is that you have hurt Sanders; the other that you broke in here so roughly that you frightened your aunt."

"And I 'll frighten you if you don't behave yourself," was the response.

She shook her head sadly. "Then you will make me go away from here where you won't see me any more. I don't want to go — go and leave you."

"And you won't, either. You 'll stop here."

Still she shook her head. "If you are unkind I shall go. It will be when you are asleep, so that you won't know it and you can't help it; but if

you will be kind to me and to everybody, I shall stay, and we shall all be happy."

"Come out, then, to the pagoda. It 's stifling in here." He stretched out his hand, and she fell back a step. "Remember!" she said warningly.

"Remember what?"

"Not to touch me. See what I have for you." She took out of her pocket a spool of fine wire. "Do you remember you said you would make me a coronet? We could not make it with waxed thread, but we can string the beads on this and bend it any way we like. See?" She bent the wire in points.

"That won't be bad," said Billy, his brow slowly clearing and his attention at once distracted.

"I don't know that you have enough yellow beads."

"Come out and see."

"You take the spool and go. I will come in a few minutes."

"No, you don't! You 're coming now!" he answered, with a return of anger.

"Is that the way to talk to a princess?" She smiled gayly into the suddenly morose face. "You 're to do as I say if I am to wear a coronet. Go! I 'll not keep you waiting long — and look at that lump above Sanders's eye! Oh," with a sudden change of tone, "I 'm so sorry to see that!"

"He tried to keep me from coming in."

Frances shook her head. "There is no use in being strong unless you are gentle, too," she said. "I can't like you unless you are sorry for that."

"Well, I am sorry — sorry Sanders got in my way." A gleam lighted the young fellow's eyes as he made the addition.

"Then go," she pointed smilingly out toward the pagoda, "and wait for me! I command it!" She smiled, and after a long look he smiled too.

"Come on, then, Sanders," he said suddenly, and turning, he left the room without a word to his mute relatives.

"Oh, Miss Rogers, what a wonderful way you have with him!" said Miss Hereford in a breathless voice, when the steps of the two men had died away. "You see yourself that you could n't leave us!"

The laughter had died out of the girl's face, and she turned to face her hosts with a stern earnestness in strange contrast to her fair youth.

"Yes, I see it, but not in the way you think. I am yielding myself to a slavery, to a dangerous slavery, many would say, for that boy is scarcely more reasonable or self-controlled than an animal. Why should I consent to do it? Never for money surely. I would rather scrub in your kitchen. Not from attachment to you. You are only acquaintances of a few days who have been kind to me. You have both of you known of Christian Science. To some degree you have seen its workings; yet you are indifferent to its help for this afflicted boy, although you call yourselves believers in Jesus Christ. Know, then, that it is nothing but the strength that Science has given me that keeps me here; nothing but Principle which will

not let me put this cup from me, that makes me go now to spend my time with that childish man who to mortal sense could kill me with a blow in some sudden passion. Principle will quell my fear of him. God will take care of me as he did of Daniel."

There was nothing dramatic in the girl's manner, but her earnest speech made the red return to Miss Hereford's face and her heart to beat quite as fast as had her nephew's wrath. She felt arraigned and humbled, and glancing at Maurice saw agitation in his flushed countenance.

He spoke first. "You are severe, Miss Rogers, but you are entirely right. I am so certain of it that unless Miss Hereford consents not to mention Billy's case to any physician, but to make your sacrifice as light as may be, I shall urge your return to Boston at once."

"Maurice, you 're crazy! She can't go!" Miss Hereford spoke excitedly.

Burling turned to her. "Don't you think her very courageous — astonishingly kind?"

"Of course I do. You know I do."

"Well, she has just told you why she is so. This is indeed having the courage of her convictions. What holds us back, Aunt Eleanor, from asking this young lady to try the help for Billy's mind which we were glad enough to accept for a dog's body?"

Miss Hereford cleared her throat in perplexity. "The rector" — she began.

"The rector be hanged!" broke forth Burling

emphatically. "I never happened to learn of that reverend gentleman's taking up any cross and carrying it as Miss Rogers is doing now. I for one have come to wish with all my heart that she should bring any and every sort of influence she has at her command to bear upon that poor boy of ours; and if she succeeds in stopping his present trend downward and helps him to climb ever so little in the direction of intelligence and happiness, I am ready to place all the credit of it wherever she does."

Frances gave the speaker a bright, unsmiling look, then turned to her hostess.

"And you, Miss Hereford?" she asked.

"I want you, my dear," was the piteous answer.

"Don't you want God more?"

"He knows I want him. He knows that I pray to him every night and beg for strength to be resigned to his will."

"You will learn really to know God's will, Miss Hereford, and then a new understanding will come of what the Bible means by saying that he is a very present help in trouble. It is a grand awakening to discover that nothing can be too good to be true."

Miss Hereford regarded the face bending over her. Its strength and brightness fascinated her.

"Could you cure this cold of mine?" she asked.

"No, but God could."

"I've sent for the doctor!" exclaimed Miss Hereford hastily.

"We know you have," said Maurice briefly;

"but about Billy. If you should ever be obliged, Aunt Eleanor, to admit to your rector the fact that you had asked a Christian to pray for Billy, I will take the reproach — the blame of it. Will that do?"

"Yes, yes, dear child." Miss Hereford still looked into Frances's down-bent face, and a little break came in her voice. "I 'm sure you would never do anything that was n't right, and I 'm willing you should do whatever you can for Billy. Now pray go. I 'm in such terror that he will be rushing back here. Maurice, you 'll take care of her."

Without further words the two started for the pagoda, Frances bearing a lightened heart.

CHAPTER XV

THE REMEMBERING RINGS

THIS morning's experience had convinced Sanders that Mr. Burling knew what he was talking about when he hinted at a time soon coming when his position would be untenable unless some change for the better should take place in his charge.

Miss Rogers's sympathy for himself, no less than her influence with Mr. William, had caused her to rise largely in Sanders's esteem after the interview in Miss Hereford's room ; and as he cast sullen and injured looks at his imperious young master when they had reached the pagoda, he sent also continuous expectant glances across the lawn, hoping for Frances's appearance.

"Here, pick out all the yellow beads!" commanded the young man. "Put them in a separate box!"

"You pig-'eaded young ruffian!" thought the injured attendant as he obeyed.

"My 'ead is swimming like a top, sir," he began, as he sorted. "I can't stop with you, Mr. William, if you" —

"Don't whine," interrupted the boy. "Be lively. I want those beads all ready by the time the princess gets here."

Sanders sniffed. "She won't stop either unless you" —

"Hold your noise! What do you know about the princess? What a time she is!" said the young fellow, suddenly rising from the chair where he had flung himself and striding to the entrance to the pagoda with a movement very different from his usual lazy and nonchalant action.

"I 'm sure she 'll be 'ere directly, sir. Won't you sit down, Mr. William? It 's 'er horders, and she 's a lady worth listening to, she is."

Sanders was relieved to see a pleasant change come over his master's face. "We must listen to her," said Billy.

For a minute he walked up and down the floor, and then his impatience returned.

"Why does n't she come? I 'll see to her," he said, with a sudden reaction of mood. He started out on the grass.

"Mr. William, sir, will the beads go on the wire? You 'ave n't tried!" called Sanders anxiously.

The suggestion was successful, and a few minutes were consumed in experimenting with the wire, which was found to be sufficiently slender.

"They 'll look well on 'er 'ighnesses 'air, Mr. William," suggested Sanders, and the mildness that overspread his master's face caused him almost to forget the swelling on his forehead in admiration of his own powers of strategy.

"The 'ousekeeper's niece — 'er 'ighness! This is rum!" he thought. "What would Dudley say!"

"Her hair would n't be bad to string beads on, eh, Sanders? I think when she comes I 'll pull out some."

"It would 'urt her, sir."

"I had n't thought of that. Perhaps I 'd better not. She might try to run away — but she would n't get far, I can tell her that."

"Hamericans can, sir, hespecially princesses. They 're neither to bind nor to 'old, sir," responded Sanders, quite as anxious now as the family to insure Miss Rogers's remaining, and increasingly charmed with his newly discovered powers of invention. Sanders was not prone to underrate himself.

The boy's restless eyes looked out again to descry the blue gown. "I 'm going to fetch her," he exclaimed suddenly, and jumped down upon the grass. Stepping around the corner of the little house, he almost ran into Frances and Burling, noiselessly approaching.

The girl recognized the impatience in his face.

"You came to meet me?" she asked pleasantly.

The young fellow's clinched hands loosened. "Will the wire do?" she went on.

"Yes, it 's all right," he answered sulkily, and they all entered the pagoda.

Burling took his newspaper and pipe into the hammock at the opposite side of the little room, where he could watch the scene at the table, which engrossed him far more than the news of the day. The two young people had their chairs drawn near together, while Sanders stood behind the table, a discolored mark above his eye.

Burling turned sick at heart as he observed it, and then glanced at the blonde head near the dark one as the two bent over the bead boxes. The mist that suddenly obscured his vision made a nimbus about that fair hair.

"I think Sanders must be very uncomfortable, Mr. Hereford," said Frances presently to her companion.

"I 've told you to call me Billy. I like you," remarked the boy.

"It is pleasant to like people, isn't it?" she returned.

Billy smiled at her. "Yes," he said.

"The unhappiest thing in the world is to dislike people, because the happiest thing is to like them," went on the girl. She spoke to him slowly always, and now her blue eyes met his kindly.

"Do you like me?" he asked.

"Yes; but I might like you a great deal better than I do."

He looked puzzled a minute. "Then I 'll make you," he said at last.

"You can; but not with your strong hands and arms. Do you think I could make you like me more if I should strike your forehead and make it look the way Sanders's does?"

The boy glanced curiously at his man's disfigured face, then back at Frances, with a childish shake of his head. "You 'd be sorry if you did," he remarked threateningly.

"Are you sorry?" she asked; then as he paused uncertainly, she added: "That is the way you can

make me like you better, — by being sorry that you hurt Sanders and trying to make him comfortable."

The boy looked again at the girl, and then back at the man. A new thought seemed working in his mind.

"You can make yourself a ring, if you like, Sanders ; I don't mind," he said at last. "We 're not going to use the needles now."

"Thank you, Mr. William." Sanders smiled faintly. "I think I 'd sooner watch 'er 'ighness make the coronet."

"There. Do you like me any better now?" asked the boy.

"Yes." Frances nodded reassuringly. "I can tell you something to remember, Billy. The only way to be happy is to love everybody in the world. When we love people we do kind things for them."

"I 'm doing a kind thing for you now," he answered, "letting you make yourself a crown."

"Yes." Her deft fingers bent the points as fast as each section was filled with beads. "And whenever you do a kind thing to your Aunt Eleanor, or Uncle Maurice, or Sanders, or even to little Timmy, it makes me happy, because it is right. Wrong things, like being angry and hurting people or speaking roughly to them, make me unhappy, and you unhappy, and everybody. I 'm always so sorry when I forget and am cross or unkind myself. When we get this coronet finished, let us make two remembering rings. I will make one for you and you will make one for me, and they will help us remember to love everybody, all the time."

"All right," responded the boy willingly, — "hurry up, Sanders! Did you hear the princess? Thread the needles!"

Frances raised her eyebrows. "That is n't the way I should say it. I should find a pleasanter way to ask. That sounds like a rough boy. You don't suppose a princess could enjoy sitting out here with a rough boy?" She smiled as she said it.

Billy bit his lip and scowled. After a pause he looked back at his man. "I 'm sorry if you 've the headache, Sanders; and if you can't see to thread the needles, I dare say Mr. Burling will do it. It bores me."

"Of course I will. What can I do?" Maurice leisurely left the hammock and advanced.

"You see, Billy," Frances lightly bent her head toward the newcomer, "that is kindness."

"And does that make you like Maurice?" inquired the boy quickly.

"Yes."

"Then he can't thread the needles. I 'll do it myself."

"I can do them, Mr. William," protested Sanders. "My 'ead does n't 'um near to what it did."

"Still, I think one of the gentlemen wants to do it for you this time, Sanders," said Frances quietly.

"I should be delighted," said Burling.

"Well, you won't then. Get out!" said his nephew, and seriously as Maurice and Frances regarded the petty situation, each of them had diffi-

culty in restraining a smile at the efforts of the big clumsy hands, as Billy scowled at his task.

Sanders stood on one foot and then on the other, in momentary fear of an explosion.

"Really, your 'ighness — really, Mr. William," he stammered, when the strain began to tell on him.

"The needle is too small, you idiot!" ejaculated Billy, flinging the bit of steel from him. "Nobody could thread it!"

"A bigger one won't take on the bead, Mr. William. There are plenty more of them 'ere," eagerly, "and I 'll thread one in a jiffy, please, sir."

Billy turned slowly around, still scowling, until his eyes met those of Frances.

"We need to hurry with that remembering ring," she said. "Such a disagreeable word popped out then!"

"Well, Maurice shan't thread them, all the same," declared the boy doggedly.

"Good is the only Power," said Frances, her eyes on her work.

The boy's brow slowly cleared. "Sanders has n't any headache," he went on. "Why should n't he do it?"

"Very well. Look at this now. Is n't this a pretty nice coronet?"

She had made a row of points, the middle one rising a little above the others. "Here are a couple of golden hairpins to fasten it with." She put her hand up and took them from her hair,

and slipped one through each end of the bead decoration.

Billy sprang to his feet. Burling marveled at the interest in his face.

"I can put that on for you," said the boy, and Frances allowed his awkward hands to adjust the coronet in her fluffy hair.

"A little higher on this side, Billy, eh?" suggested Burling.

"All right." The young fellow made the change and stood off to see the effect.

"There, Maurice!" he said triumphantly.

Burling nodded, and the girl's cheeks grew pink as she held herself for inspection under the three pairs of eyes of the standing men.

"Have to mind our p's and q's now we have a resident princess, eh, Billy?"

"Yes; and we 've to mind her, too," said the young fellow, his pleased, admiring gaze unswerving.

"Certainly," said Frances quietly. "You have crowned me. Now you must obey me."

"Down on our knees, Billy, and swear allegiance," said Burling, and slipping his hand through his nephew's arm, he sank on one knee before the wicker throne, the boy following his motion obediently, his bold eyes full of a new earnestness, and the listless hanging of his parted lips lost in an eagerness of expression.

Burling waited with smiling gaze for the girl to speak. Sanders looked on and thought of Dudley.

"I shan't tell her," he decided. "She would n't believe me, and if she did, she could n't understand it." He swelled importantly with the feeling that he was in this plot, was a part of it, was looked upon with favor by his superiors, did understand their efforts, and was about to benefit by them.

Frances glanced quickly away from Burling's quizzical eyes into the nobly set brown ones.

"Billy knows what I want him to swear allegiance to. It is to Good — for Good is the only Power. We have been talking about it."

"Yes," said the boy, "and I 'm not to thump Sanders or Timmy, so she 'll like me better."

"And I 'll take the same vow," said Burling.

"Oh, she likes you well enough. It is n't any matter about you."

"I dare say," remarked Burling dryly. "It never has been any matter about me."

"I 'm to have a remembering ring," went on Billy, "and so is the princess. She 's not to thump anybody, either."

"And no jewelry for me?" said Burling.

"Oh, no, you 'll do well enough," returned the boy hastily. "If you don't behave yourself, I 'll make you."

The princess shook her head. "That is part of it," she said. "There is n't to be any more making people do things except by love."

The idea thus presented seemed to touch the young fellow's slow sense of humor. The rare and welcome sound of his laughter rang out.

"Say, that 's a good one, Maurice! I 've got to

love Sanders, I suppose, and so have you. Ha! ha! ha!" Again the laugh waked the echoes so infectiously that even Sanders's uplifted and long-suffering expression relaxed to a smile.

"Of course," said the princess calmly. "Most certainly. And now, my good subjects," she added, "you may rise. We understand each other."

Burling lifted appreciative eyes to her. "We kiss your hand," he said, moving to take hers.

"No, you don't!" exclaimed Billy, suddenly sobering and seizing his uncle's fingers. "She does n't like it and neither do I."

Frances's cheeks were bright as two roses, and Burling flicked the knees of his knickerbockers with his handkerchief.

"If your highness will kindly hasten with my nephew's ring," he said; "I think Billy was near to forgetting just then."

"It was n't that, you old duffer! I loved you all right," protested the boy indignantly; "but she does n't like to be touched, do you?" appealing suddenly to Frances, who hastily rose and approached the table.

"It 's no matter, Billy," she answered. "Here are the needles ready. If we don't get to work we shall not finish the rings before your lunch is brought."

They seated themselves beside the table, and Burling strolled out of the pavilion.

"You said the other day that you broke your ring up every evening. This one is n't to be broken, is it?" asked the girl.

"No, this one is to make you like me better. If any one breaks it, I 'll break every bone in his body."

"Oh, Billy!" exclaimed Frances sadly.

"I mean" — a deep color flew all over the boy's face, — "I mean — I won't, you know. That 's what I meant. I won't even kick him."

There was a very kind look in the eyes which he sought so eagerly, and Frances smiled. That rush of color and those words brought her the happiest moment she had known at Waterview.

"What stones are you going to use in my ring?" she asked.

"Sapphires, of course; — unless," with reluctant second thought, "unless you want diamonds. You 're a silly if you do."

"I think I would rather you chose this time."

He sighed relief.

"And what stone will you choose for yourself?" she went on.

"What do you think?"

She smiled and lifted her shoulders in a girlish gesture.

"I do love diamonds, Billy," she declared softly.

"I like them well enough," he returned generously. "You can make mine of diamonds if you like."

So Sanders went at his accustomed work of sorting, and the two began their task.

"Yes, these will not be common rings," said Frances, as they worked, "and we must take great care of them. Every day we are like people

climbing a hill. We walk firmly and climb safely when we are doing right, but when we do wrong we slip down. These rings are to help us not to slip down ; for heaven is at the top of the hill."

"'M, h'm," said Billy, engrossed in picking up a refractory sapphire. "I know all about heaven. My mother 's there."

"And we 're all going there when we stop forgetting."

"No, when we die." The big boy spoke absently, for he at that moment succeeded in impaling the bead.

"But dying has n't anything to do with it, Billy ; I want you to remember that. We must climb up right here and now and every day. When things don't go right, and we are tempted to grow angry and be unkind to people, those are the hard places where we slip down if we are not very careful."

"But we shall have these rings," said Billy.

"Yes. Love will help us that way, and it helps us every way. Did your Aunt Eleanor ever read to you in the Bible the psalm, 'The Lord is my Shepherd '?"

"Perhaps. Did she, Sanders ?"

"I don't remember, Mr. William ; but she hoften used to read to you of a Sunday, sir. If you remember, sir, you liked the story of the boy that killed the giant."

Billy scowled in an effort of memory ; then his face cleared, and Frances was pleased at the intelligent gleam that came with his boyish, handsome smile.

"Of course. The chap that let the giant have it in the forehead. He was a good one. Aunt Eleanor said he was just about my size. *He* did n't have any remembering ring." The brown eyes twinkled with mischief.

"Yes, yes, Billy. David was good and the giant was evil. The giant seemed to be very big and strong and terrible, but just a little stone that a boy threw destroyed him. It is always so with evil. It is n't anything really. You can always destroy it." The girl smiled at her companion. "There 's one thing it is always right to thump."

"What?" The boy's waning interest quickly revived.

"Well, supposing I were to say now that I had to go back to the house — that I could n't stay with you any longer."

"I would n't let you," said Billy promptly.

Frances nodded. "You see, that would be the giant that you must thump."

"What?"

"It would be wrong for you to try to keep me here if I ought to go; so you would have to thump that wrong feeling and let me go."

The boy's face looked troubled. "You are n't going, are you?"

"No, I don't have to go yet. We are traveling up the hill of life very pleasantly now, and neither of us is tempted to do wrong and slip down and hurt ourselves."

"Say, Sanders," Billy took his curious eyes from the girl's face and looked up at his man, "that 's queer talk, eh?"

"I like to 'ear her, sir. It 's like fairy tales, sir. I was hever fond of tales."

"Sometime I want to read you that psalm I spoke of about the Lord being our Shepherd," went on Frances, proceeding with the elaborate double-threaded ring she was constructing. "You know how kind a shepherd always is, and this shepherd's name is Love. Every morning when we wake up he is going to help us all day — help us not to fall. There is a song about it. Can you sing, Billy?"

"I don't think so. Can I, Sanders?"

"'E used to sing, mum," said Sanders respectfully, feeling his way. This might be disobeying orders, but Frances looked at him encouragingly. "'E used to sing, but of late 'e 'asn't been in spirits, mum." Sanders cleared his throat. The girl's quick nod showed him that he had said enough.

"I should like to teach you this song, because it will go with our rings;" and the girl — the amber coronet still bent above her work — sang softly and clearly, —

"Shepherd, show me how to go
O'er the hillside steep;
How to gather, how to sow, —
How to feed Thy sheep.
I will listen for Thy voice,
Lest my footsteps stray,
I will follow and rejoice
All the rugged way."

She looked up, to find Billy, his work dropped, listening, with his eyes intently upon her.

"Sing that again," he said.

She obeyed, and this time it was not so easy to control her voice.

When the last note had died away there was a moment's silence, then the boy sighed.

"I wish you did n't want me to love anybody but you," he said simply.

"Everybody — everybody," returned Frances gently. "There is enough for all. The Shepherd gives it to us. He is Divine Love."

"Remember that for me, Sanders," said Billy. "I might forget. I 'm going to see if he comes in the morning."

"It 's just tales, sir," said Sanders deprecatingly.

"Oh, no, Sanders," returned Frances; "it is the truth. You cannot see the Shepherd, but you can feel him, and he proves his presence in countless ways. Wait. You will find it so."

As she finished speaking, Maurice Burling reappeared at the entrance to the pagoda. He was very pale, and the look in his eyes made Frances rise involuntarily as he approached the table. Billy went on lifting the sapphires on the needle-tip.

Burling rested a hand on his nephew's broad shoulder, and returned the girl's waiting gaze.

"I have had news from England — sad news," he said. "Billy's father has been accidentally killed. This," he lifted his hand and replaced it impressively, "this is Sir William Hereford."

Frances started and looked at the young fellow,

who did not even drop his work as he responded equably: —

"My father dead? Then he's gone to heaven, too, I suppose."

Frances saw the effort for control in Burling's face. He was thinking of a stately mansion, and parks, and forest where to-day the dappled deer were grazing.

"This is Sir William Hereford," he said again, his voice unsteady, "and he is — stringing beads!"

Frances took a step forward and clasped both hands unconsciously before her.

"This is Sir William Hereford," she returned in a low, ringing tone, "and he is the child of God; and there is no power in the universe which can deprive him of his birthright."

CHAPTER XVI

THE ONLY POWER

MISS HEREFORD was at first prostrated by the sudden news of bereavement; but her grief and excitement were due more to her hopeless remoteness from home than to the loss of the brother who had of late years taken but slight interest in his family.

"We must go instantly — to-morrow!" were her first words to Burling when the overwhelming fact in the cable message had been revealed to her as gently as might be.

"Will you take Dudley and go?" he asked kindly.

"And you and Billy," she added quickly.

"Do you remember who Billy is now?"

"Oh!" she cried, with a note of pain in her voice. "I never thought it could come — never! never!"

"But it has come. He must more than ever be our first consideration. What effect do you think it would have to take him away from Miss Rogers?"

Miss Hereford lifted her hand to her bewildered head. "I had n't thought of Miss Rogers." Suddenly she lifted her tearful eyes. "I have it. We will take Miss Rogers to England."

Burling shook his head gravely. "She is not a chattel. What do we know of her and her attachments? She might consent, but even then would you break this spell which seems to be working for good? I would not alter one condition which seems to be favorable. We will wait to see if my presence at Ardleigh is imperative. If it is not, you can take Dudley and go. I will stay with Billy."

"I could n't, Maurice," said the little woman chokingly. "I could never leave the child!"

Burling nodded gravely. "Even if everything were as hopeless as before, I should regret to take him home now while all the tongues are wagging. The boy would be the storm centre of curiosity and speculatioh. I regard it as no slight blessing that we are separated by an ocean from all that. Of course, the lawyers and all our connection to the remotest cousin will respect our remaining here if I state that we have at last found hope for the heir of Ardleigh."

"Maurice, shall you say that? Do you feel that? He was so violent this morning."

"I know, but she quelled him, you remember. Of course, I don't know what it may amount to, but I do know it would be madness to throw away the chance. There is not the slightest doubt in my mind that if Billy were separated from Miss Rogers now, melancholia or dangerous violence would ensue. Whether he ever develops beneath her influence enough to take his place in the world is another question; but I swear that girl has made

me believe that there may be a God who takes an interest in us after all."

"Maurice! My dear!" Miss Hereford's swollen features expressed her genuine dismay.

"Well, you have always said it, of course, but you have never seemed actually to believe in an omnipotent goodness. Don't cry, Aunt Eleanor," he added, and his voice gained a greater charm in the tenderness with which he appealed to her. "You have been the dearest and most uncomplaining of women. I will try to be brother and nephew both to you now. Let us know that there are better times coming. I will ring for Dudley, and see you again after a little while."

When Dudley came she brought with her the doctor, who had just arrived, and Maurice left the room, free to return to his own train of thought and to seek Frances in the pagoda.

The two remained with Billy while Sanders went to the house to bring out his master's luncheon. The events of the morning had reduced that worthy almost to forgetfulness of his own importance and his own wrongs. The exciting climax, making him body servant to the reigning master of Ardleigh, lent wings to his feet in his desire to see Dudley.

Good fortune sent her his way while he waited for the burdened tray, and her eyes were red.

"When do we go 'ome?" he ejaculated softly.

"We don't go home," she returned bitterly; "and what do you suppose is the reason? The housekeeper's niece, if you please."

"I was thinking of 'er coming along," returned Sanders, "wondering what they would do. I 'ope I 'm an hordinarily brave man, but — look at my 'ead, Miss Dudley. That 'appened because I tried to keep Mr. William — ahem, Sir William," the speaker drew himself up, "away from the princess for five minutes."

"Away from who?"

Sanders cleared his throat in embarrassment. "That 's what 'e calls 'er. You need n't look at me like that, Miss Dudley; I did n't hinvent the title, and 'e 's got to be 'umored, 'as n't 'e? So you see if 'e hassaults me for a thing like that, I would n't hundertake 'im if 'e was to be took away from that young woman forcible. No, Miss Dudley, I 'ave my mother to think of."

"Humph. Set a beggar on horseback!" commented the maid again scornfully.

Sanders rolled his eyes feelingly. He knew that he could scarcely translate his new estimate of Sir William's princess into language which Dudley could understand.

"You don't know that young lady," he said at last. "I can hassure you she is all 'eart!"

"All art, I should say so! You don't often hit it so near, Sanders," retorted the maid, flouncing away as a servant appeared with the luncheon tray.

Sanders's thoughts were busy as he crossed the lawn with his burden. The visions he had had of a return to familiar haunts had been dashed by Dudley's words, but he was too firmly convinced

now of Miss Rogers's importance to complain of the decision. As he entered the pagoda he saw her and his master facing each other, the completed rings in their hands, while Burling, thoughtful and abstracted, looked on.

"Now, what are these rings for, Billy?" Frances was asking.

"To remember each other by," he answered promptly.

"No; we shall remember each other anyway. These are to remember something else."

"Oh, yes; not to thump Sanders."

"Not to do any unkindness — to anybody," said Frances slowly. "We are both to remember that 'Love is the only Power.' Say that, Billy."

"'Love is the only Power,'" repeated the boy. "'T is n't, though," he added.

"Yes, it is. Other things — everything evil that seems to be power is n't. Evil is a lie, and it can be proved so."

"I 'll put on your ring for you," said Billy.

"Yes, I want you to; and while you are doing it say that truth I just taught you."

The young fellow took her hand in both his and pushed the blue ring on her finger. "'Love is the only Power,'" he said. "Now, you."

She placed the ring on his finger. "'Love is the only Power,'" she repeated slowly. "We won't forget, Billy, will we?"

"I can remember right while you 're looking at me," said the boy, with a gentleness that fell strangely on the ears of the listening men. "San-

ders, I don't like to see your forehead. Just keep behind my chair, will you?"

"You need n't mind, Mr. — Sir William; it does n't 'urt me now."

Burling opened his lips to speak. He was about to tell Sanders not to use the title, but he thought better of it. Let the boy get used to it. Billy noticed the new form of address.

"What 's that you called me?" he asked, as Sanders uncovered the steaming tray.

"That title belongs to you now," said Burling gravely. "Your father is dead."

The young fellow looked up, vaguely troubled by the other's tone. "Then there is n't any Sir Edward Hereford?"

"No; so you are Sir William."

The boy shrugged his broad shoulders and smiled. "Won't I make them all stand around when I 'm a man!" he remarked, taking up his soup spoon.

"But that is over now, you know," said Frances suggestively. "I 've just given you a ring."

He lifted his handsome head and met her look.

"What a blessing," she went on, "that you know now what is the only power!"

She rose; so did he. "You are n't going, are you?" he asked hastily.

"Yes. I want my lunch too."

"There 's enough here for us both. I — I don't want any. I 'm not hungry," he stammered eagerly.

"My aunt is ill. I have left her all the morn-

ing to stay out here with you. Now I must go to her."

"When are you coming again?"

"To-morrow."

"There is all this afternoon and all to-night," said the boy, "before to-morrow."

He planted himself before her, and his eyes were gloomy.

"Yes, and that is where we have to be unselfish."

"I don't have to be unselfish."

"Yes — because Love is unselfishness, and you're wearing the ring."

"So are you," with a sudden idea. "You have to love me."

"You, and everybody else, remember; and you are to love me, and everybody else. My aunt is ill and needs me. You're to love her, you see."

"It's beastly!" ejaculated the boy.

"That isn't the way to talk to a princess." She smiled and touched her crown. "Is it on straight still? You're not going to spoil our lovely morning, are you? I wish you a good appetite, Sir William. Wish me one too, and good-by."

"Good-by, Princess," he answered sadly, and to Burling's relief, he stood aside, though reluctantly, and let her go, his eyes following her retreating figure.

Burling accompanied her, and as soon as they were out of earshot of the little summer-house he spoke.

"I must go to New York, Miss Rogers, and for

the last hour I have been trying to concoct some scheme to do so safely."

"Safely?"

"Yes; it is the problem of the fox and the goose and the corn. My last idea is to take you and Miss Hereford and my nephew and his man with me — if you will go."

"Why such a caravan? I don't understand."

"Why, surely you would be uncomfortable to be left here with him; yet if I attempted to take him without you there would be the — the results might be embarrassing."

"Oh, I see. No, I 'm not afraid, Mr. Burling. I 'm not afraid, since you want Science."

"I should be gone only a few days, and if there should be any trouble there is Harvey, the coachman."

"Oh, Mr. Burling, please stop yielding to any such thought! I don't wonder that you have had it, and we have all been tempted, but that is over." The girl's eyes shone. "You can go away and stay forever, so far as I am concerned."

He looked around quickly. "That is rather more permission than I asked for. Can't you" — he smiled — "put it a little more mildly?"

She nodded. "You know what I meant. We shall all be taken care of."

Burling's face grew grave again. "I am anxious to be spared returning to England just now. Billy could n't go, and you know why. It will necessitate an amount of cabling to come to an understanding of the situation. I must be where

I can send my questions and receive my answers speedily."

"Without a doubt; and you must know that we are safe every minute that you are gone."

Frances ate a solitary luncheon that day, for Miss Graves took only a glass of milk in her room. The girl had some quiet hours for reading and the first systematic work for her patient, before her aunt, pale and languid, appeared in a wrapper in their sitting-room.

Frances started up to greet her, and placed her in the most comfortable chair.

"I 'm ever so much obliged to you for doing my work as you have to-day," said Miss Miranda. "Through my open window I 've heard more coming and going than common, seems to me. Has there been a lot of company?"

"No." Frances drew her chair so near that she could touch her aunt, who regarded her radiant face questioningly.

"Miss Hereford has been ill and sent for the doctor. You heard him come, probably. No, it 's nothing serious. She is dressed, but she has a cold."

"Is that what makes you look as if you 'd lost a quarter and found ten dollars?" inquired the housekeeper curiously. "I suppose he did n't do her any good, perhaps."

Frances laughed. "Do I look happy? I am. But they have received sad news here." The smile vanished. "They have received a cable message from England that Miss Hereford's brother has been killed."

"What? The young man's father?" Miss Graves straightened up in her interest.

"Yes."

"They 'll go home, then, won't they?"

"No, it seems not. Did you know they were titled people?"

"What do you mean?"

"Yes. The father was Sir Edward Hereford, and now the son succeeds to the title."

"How you talk!" There was no languor left in the housekeeper's wan countenance. "Well, now, that 's what I call sad!" she added, after a digestion of the fact. "I should think they 'd have to go back."

Frances hesitated an instant. "You see," she began, and again hesitated. "This morning," she went on, "before the news came, I was in Miss Hereford's room — she had sent for me to inquire about you. It seems that the nephew grew tired of waiting for me in the pagoda, and he surprised everybody by appearing suddenly, very much excited, and demanded that I should come out. He frightened them by his vehemence, and I was able to persuade him to go back and wait for me; and that impressed them so much that in their sympathy for me, and their perplexity, they asked at last that I should try Science." Again the happiness flashed in the speaker's face.

"Oh, that 's it, eh?" Miss Graves regarded her niece for a silent moment. "Have you ever taken any other patient — except Timmy?" she asked after the pause.

"Yes, I have helped people a few times."

"Quite a skip from a pug to a nobleman, eh?" pursued Miss Miranda, but the banter was kindly. "Frances Rogers," she added, after another pause given to reflection, "I should n't wonder if that 's the reason why they won't go back to England."

"What — Science?"

"No," returned Miss Graves bluntly, "you. I believe it 's just a little tow-headed Yankee schoolgirl that 's keeping an English nobleman out of his own. What 's that thing?" the housekeeper squinted at the ornament in her niece's hair. "I have n't got my glasses on, but I 've been trying for the last five minutes to make out what that is you 've got on your head."

Frances flushed as she involuntarily put her hand up to the amber circlet. "I 'd forgotten all about it." She gave Miss Miranda a laughing glance. "Sir William Hereford does n't know that I 'm a little tow-headed Yankee schoolgirl. He calls me princess. This is his idea."

"I want to know!" said Miss Graves, coming nearer to observe the coronet. "Well, you 're a wonder to me, Frances. I should think you 'd begin to feel luny yourself. They have n't said anything about taking you to England, I hope?"

"Oh, no. I have n't seen Miss Hereford at all since the blow fell on her, poor lady; but Mr. Burling was evidently in much anxiety."

"Well, it 's a mercy if they don't buy your steamer ticket and then inform me when it 's all over."

"Oh, they are considerate, Aunt Mira; they are considerate."

Miss Graves continued to regard her companion with that curiosity which so often now dwelt in her glance.

"You 're hopeful, Frances," she said slowly, "I can see you are;" and for answer the girl smiled confidently.

CHAPTER XVII

THE MORNING LESSON

MISS GRAVES was busy in her sitting-room the following morning when Sanders appeared to her, his eyes roving about the room in search of some one.

"Good-morning, Mrs. Graves."

"Miss," returned the housekeeper, the assertion of her single blessedness slipping mechanically from her lips through frequent repetition.

"I was 'oping to find the princess 'ere."

"You were, eh? Well, there is n't a crowned head about the place that I 'm aware of."

"Quite so, mum," returned Sanders, with some embarrassment; "but you see, Sir William, 'e will 'ave it so, and if I hever did 'ear your niece's name, I can't just recall it. You see, Mr. Burling being gone, I was going to hask 'er if she would 'ave the goodness to come hout hearly this morning."

"Mr. Burling gone! What do you mean?" Miss Graves's black eyes snapped anxiously.

"He went to New York yesterday to cable the lawyers and the relatives and that, mum."

"I should think he 'd have taken you and the young man with him," said Miss Miranda quickly.

"Bless you, Mrs. Graves," returned Sanders

anxiously, his hand involuntarily seeking the variegated hues on his forehead, "'e would n't 'ave gone a step, Mr. William would n't, not without 'er 'ighness!"

"Who *are* you talking about?" asked Miss Miranda, with some exasperation.

"Your niece, mum. Mr. Burling knew it would be 'opeless to try it, and 'e hasked the princess would she go or would she stay — so 'e told me, Mrs. Graves — and she said she 'd sooner stay."

The housekeeper's eyes were flashing, and Frances, at this moment coming in, felt their fire.

"Why did n't you tell me Mr. Burling was going away?" demanded Miss Miranda.

"I thought it might worry you. He is not to be gone long, and it was necessary for him to go. I knew that there was nothing to fear."

Miss Graves compressed her lips for a silent instant.

"Nothing to fear! As if you were any judge! You 're just as ignorant, Frances Rogers, as a white, woolly, bleating baa-lamb! I 've a mind to lock you in your room till Mr. Burling comes back."

"Oh, Mrs. Graves!" besought Sanders, his eyes rolling.

"Miss," snapped the housekeeper.

"'E 'd tear the 'ouse down," continued Sanders earnestly. "I do hassure you, mum, Mr. William is the woolly lamb when 'er 'ighness is with 'im. She can wind 'im 'round 'er finger, mum; but if 'e 's disappointed of seeing 'er, I would n't be han-

swerable for the consequences. 'E 's that 'eadstrong and boisterous, mum. I 'ope I 'm an hordinarily brave man, but if you lock up the princess I — I can't stop, really."

"No, no, Sanders," said Frances soothingly. "Calm yourself. Remember all that we said yesterday."

"Yes, I do, your 'ighness," returned the other. "Mr. William — Sir William — was 'aving it hall over again this morning. 'E remembered wonderful about the Shepherd, and 'e was that civil to me I 'd scarce know 'im ; but it was hall a 'urry to get ready for the princess, and if you failed 'im, mum, there 'd be a terrible storm hall the same."

"I shan't fail him," said the girl. "Aunt Mira, may the young man and Sanders come on your piazza a little while right now?"

Miss Graves put her hand to her head. Her thoughts were in a whirl, but above them shone the confident, calm, girlish face, that seemed to dominate a situation which apparently had already passed far beyond Miss Miranda's control.

She hastily decided that to have the little party on her piazza would be much more conducive to peace of mind than to be wondering all the morning what was going on in the pagoda. "Yes, bring him here," she said briefly.

"Sir William 'as never walked around 'ere," said Sanders, "but I hexpect 'e will now, mum," and he sped away.

"Well, Frances Rogers!" was all the housekeeper could say when they were left alone.

"Don't you think it was better than for me to go to New York?"

"It does n't much matter at this late day what I think, does it?"

"Well, I had accepted the duty. You also wished me to, you remember."

"Did I have an idea what it was coming to? 'Your 'ighness!' Well, if I ever! I don't half know whether I 'm dreaming or awake — the whole thing is so queer."

Frances gave an odd little smile. "Of course. Don't you remember the hymn, —

> 'This life 's a dream, an empty show
> For man's delusion given.'

The great point is to remember who the giver of the delusion is. God does n't delude us."

"Don't talk riddles to me. I never guessed a conundrum yet. What do you suppose we ought to do about Miss Hereford, Frances? Wait till she sends for us?"

"Oh, I was going to tell you. I have just come from her. She sent for me to give me a message from Mr. Burling. She is sad but calm. I am sure she would be glad to see you."

"Well, I 'll go in after a little while. There they come," looking out of the window and espying Sanders, with his charge, approaching.

Miss Graves's lips twitched in a reluctant smile. "I might be quite overcome with the sight of a real lord — or baron — or whatever he is — if I did n't have a princess on the premises."

She took up her position near a window where

she could see without being seen, and as the long strides of the young man approached the piazza she inspected his face closely. It was the first time she had seen the youth since her niece's arrival, and the alteration from the sombre, lethargic face she remembered, to the bright one that greeted Frances now, made her start. The window was open, and for the first time Miss Miranda heard the young fellow's voice.

"You have on the ring," he said.

"Certainly, and you. We don't take those off, do we?"

Frances seated herself under the swaying canopy of leaves, and her caller glanced slowly about him, ending with a satisfied look at the blue-gowned girl. "This is n't a bad place. Is this where you live?"

"Yes. Won't you sit down?"

The visitor took the offered chair, and Sanders sank upon the step with a sigh of relief.

"At first I thought I would n't come," said Billy. "I was going to make you come out to the pagoda."

Frances gave him a smiling glance. "And then you looked at your ring and you remembered! You remembered that you were n't going to 'make' people do things any more except in one way."

Miss Graves noted the close attention with which the young fellow received her words.

"I could n't have come quite yet. I have n't studied my lesson," went on the girl; "but I should like to read it with you if you would n't mind."

"'E can read fine, Sir William can, your 'ighness," put in Sanders.

"I hate lessons," remarked Billy.

"Oh, no, you don't," returned Frances. "You only hate the way they've been given to you. I believe you'd like them with me. This is short, and I will read it aloud; and if you aren't interested you can walk about a little out there and I will join you when I am through."

She had three books in her hand, and she opened them on the table before her.

"That's a Bible," said Billy, watching her. "Is this Sunday?"

"No, but I need the Bible every day to help me up the hill we were talking about yesterday. It is the good Shepherd himself, Divine Love, who gave us the Bible. Did you know that?"

"No."

"Yes. He gives us every good thing we have."

Frances, finding her place, read aloud the lesson for the day, and her visitor scarcely took his eyes from her face as the words fell.

At last she closed the books. "That is all," she said, her heart giving a little bound as she met the unconscious pathos in her listener's face.

"Now you might sing," he said. "Aunt Eleanor sings."

"Very well. Shall it be the same song?"

"Yes, give us the same one; eh, Sanders?"

"I should say the same, by hall means, Sir William."

Miss Graves still stood, listening, by her window.

"I should be glad to have you and Sanders sing too," said Frances.

"Ho! Sanders only knows one tune, 'Sally in our Alley.' I'm tired of that."

"Well, he can learn this one. You both can."

Then Miss Graves carefully followed the words and music that fell from the singer's lips.

"Shepherd, show me how to go
O'er the hillside steep;
How to gather, how to sow, —
How to feed Thy sheep.
I will listen for Thy voice
Lest my footsteps stray,
I will follow and rejoice
All the rugged way."

"That 's pretty good; eh, Sanders?" asked the boy when the last note had died.

"'T is the prettiest song that hever I 'eard in hall my life, sir."

"Well, mind you don't sing it — that 's all."

"I should never hoffer to, sir."

"Ah, we may all sing it," said Frances. "It was given to us by a wise and good woman who knows the good Shepherd, and who knew how hard it was for us to learn how to help him feed his sheep, instead of looking out for ourselves; and how much we needed to listen for his voice, so we should not stray from the right path."

Billy was playing with the ring on his brown hand. "I did n't bring the beads," he said.

"No," answered Frances, "we 've made everything, have n't we? Let us do something else this morning."

His eyes roved quickly to her hair. "Where 's your coronet?"

"I left it in the house."

"Get it," said the boy briefly.

The girl raised her eyebrows and smiled. "That sounds like an order."

"Please get it," said the young fellow obediently.

"Certainly," she returned, rising and entering the house.

She was surprised to find Miss Graves standing where she had left her by the window. "You here still, Aunt Mira?"

"Of course I am. I calculated to see if I had n't better put on a kettle of water. I tell you there 's a good many weaker weapons than a kettle of boiling water when it comes to either a dog fight or a man fight."

"Well, you 've seen, have n't you?"

"Yes, I 've seen, and I 've been to meeting." The corners of Miss Miranda's lips twitched. "There did n't seem to be any sleepy members in your congregation."

Frances smiled too as she searched in a drawer for the coronet. "There never are in a Christian Science congregation," she remarked. "I always think it is interesting to look over the mass of faces there and realize that not one person in that crowd is present from a sense of duty, but all because they 'd rather be there than anywhere else. In the old days I often used to hear people say, 'I 've been real good to-day — I 've been to church;' or, 'I 've been to church for two Sundays. I

don't need to go to-day.' In Science churches you can't keep the people away. I hope you 'll go with me once, just to see the happy, satisfied faces."

"Humph!" returned Miss Graves from her post by the window, where she was screened by a blind from the view of the outsiders. "Better hurry. Your young man is beginning to turn around here with a look in his eyes as if he might be going to lose his religion."

"I was sure I put that coronet in this drawer," said the girl, still searching.

"He 's got up," announced Miss Miranda; then her lips snapped together and she left her place suddenly. She had seen the tall youth make a stride toward the door and had heard Sanders's protest.

"Why *was* I soft enough not to put on that kettle!" she thought, as she swiftly passed into the outer room and confronted Billy, who had just entered.

He paused in surprise at the apparition of the dark stranger.

"Who are you?" he asked brusquely, his brows drawn together.

"My name 's Graves," said Miss Miranda, returning his stare boldly, though her heart sank.

"I don't like it," announced the youth.

"Well, I was asked to change it once, but I did n't, so you 'll have to make the best of it."

"I don't care to see you any more," said the boy, with a superb air.

Sanders had followed at his heels. "It 's the

princess's aunt, Mr. William," he said coaxingly, favoring Miss Miranda with a wink across his master's shoulder. "I 'm sure you 'd wish to speak her fair."

"You 've hidden the princess, then!" broke forth the young fellow, taking a step toward the housekeeper, his hands clinching.

Here Frances hurried into the room, and coming close to her aunt, threw an arm around her. Miss Miranda clung to her protectingly and cast a glance at the cold kettle.

"This is my dear Aunt Mira, Billy," said the girl. "Her name is Miss Graves. Aunt Mira, this is Sir William Hereford."

The boy's fast breathing lessened under the pleasant tone, but he still glowered at the housekeeper, whose face was a study.

"I love her very much indeed," said Frances slowly.

"I don't see why," returned Billy.

"Children and fools," thought Miss Miranda.

"She has always taken care of me and loved me, as your Aunt Eleanor has you."

"What a bore!" was the reply.

"Billy," said Frances warningly, "you 're forgetting so many things. Look at your ring."

The color rushed over the young fellow's face as he lifted his hand and glanced at the ring.

"Well, you did n't come," he said. "I thought she would n't let you." He seemed too abashed to raise his eyes, and Miss Graves relaxed her hold and breathed more freely.

"Supposing she would n't. What is the only power?"

"Love," responded Billy, still red, and shifting uneasily.

"Now we 'll go," said the girl. "See, I found my coronet at last. I was a very careless princess and mislaid it. I ought to take more care of the crown jewels. Aunt Mira, may we go out on your piazza a little while again? We 're going to play some game."

"Sir William is very fond of draughts, your 'ighness," suggested Sanders.

"Very well. Will you get the board, please?"

Billy's face slowly cleared, and he followed Frances out upon the piazza. When the door was closed and Sanders had gone on his errand, she turned and faced her companion.

"See how much taller you are than I am," she said. "See, my head reaches only to the bottom of your ear."

Billy looked down at her. "You don't feel bad about it, do you?" he asked anxiously.

"No, I don't; for while you are stronger than I am in some ways, I am stronger than you in others. I am more patient than you are. I 've learned how to be. I want you to learn, Billy. I felt sorry to hear you speak so sharply to my Aunt Mira."

"You see — you see — I did n't know you liked her," stammered the other. "Don't stop liking me," he added. "I 'll be better next time."

"Well," thought Miss Graves, who had heard this from her old post of observation, "if Frances

ain't a case! She seems safe enough. I believe I 'll go in and see Miss Hereford and tell her how the lion and the lamb are hobnobbing on my piazza. It 'll kind of chirk her up."

Sanders brought the checker-board promptly, and Frances and her visitor settled to the game.

Sanders sat by and watched the moves, but as they progressed his countenance gradually grew anxious, and it became evident to the girl that he was endeavoring to telegraph some idea to her from his post behind Billy's shoulder.

"Ho, I don't think you 're much of a player," remarked her opponent once, looking up triumphantly after a successful move.

She laughed, and quickly made one still more effective which he had overlooked.

"Good enough to get ahead of you," she said gayly.

Billy's brow grew dark, and Sanders's pantomime grew more emphatic, but she could make nothing of his grimaces and headshaking, and he saw the blankness in her face.

"It was no fair — your doing that!" said the boy in displeasure.

"'All 's fair in love and war,'" she answered, "and this is war, is n't it?" She smiled at him, and he paused a minute before making another play.

Sanders had taken an envelope from his pocket and was writing on its back.

"'Er 'ighness don't know hall the rules of the game as well as you do, Sir William," he said at

last, and coming behind Frances's chair, he slipped the paper into her lap. As soon as she had accomplished another move she let her eyes fall to the written scrawl, —

"Beter not beet him. Sumtimes he kicks."

Her lips twitched as she read. "Well, which one of us is coming out ahead, I wonder," she asked of her opponent.

"I am. I always do," returned the boy promptly.

"I should n't think that would be any fun."

"Because I play the best," he said.

"Then I 'll have to try hard to win, so you will have a change. Don't you want me to?"

The boy's brow grew dark. "If you win, it will be because Sanders helps you. Come back, Sanders. Go and sit down."

Frances shook her head at him, still smiling. "You 're a great, great, big boy! I only come up to your ear, and yet you don't want me to beat you. I can't understand that."

Neither did Billy understand her, evidently; but he gathered that in some way he was falling short of her standard.

"Well, do you want to win?" he asked impatiently.

"Of course," she answered, drawing out the words laughingly, "else what should I play for?"

Her opponent regarded her long and gloomily. "It is n't any sport to play if I don't win," he said.

"And don't you want me to have any sport?" she asked.

He glowered at her thoughtfully. "Yes, I do," he answered at last, with a long breath, as if the effort had been great.

Frances beamed upon him. "That is very nice of you, Billy," she said, so earnestly that his face cleared.

"Now every game we play," she went on, "we are both to try as hard as we can, and then whichever wins, both of us are to be glad."

"Yes," he said, with docility, "because I love you and you love me."

The door leading to the piazza opened and Miss Graves appeared.

"Frances, I 've just come from Miss Hereford. She would like to have you bring her nephew to see her."

The housekeeper's account of the amicable condition of affairs upon her leafy porch had indeed emboldened Miss Hereford to make this request; but the interruption did not meet with a cordial reception from the object of the invitation.

Instantly Billy's face grew cold and dark as he regarded the newcomer with disfavor.

"Go into the house, Miss Coffin," he commanded briefly.

Miss Miranda stared.

"It is Miss Graves," said Frances, trying not to smile.

"What 's the difference?" remarked the boy carelessly, returning to the board.

"When would she like us to come?" asked the girl.

"Right off," returned the housekeeper, turning on her heel and entering the house.

"I suppose it ain't a mite of use losing my temper over that poor creature," she said to herself; "but I tell you what it is, Frances Rogers 'll need the patience of Job if she don't run away from this contract. I wonder how she 'll manage him now? He has n't an idea of minding his aunt."

She hastened to her window in time to hear Billy speak after making his move.

"Your turn, Princess."

"Yes, Sir William, but first, of course, we have to go to Miss Hereford."

"Not much, we don't! Not till we finish this game."

Frances reached her hand across the table and pointed to the ring he wore.

"Do you remember what has happened?" she asked gently. "Do you remember why you are Sir William Hereford? Dear Miss Hereford is sad because she has lost her brother — your father, you know. I should think you would wish to go right to her and comfort her."

The youth looked obstinate. "She 'll probably want to hug me," he said.

"Then let her," returned Frances. "I 'll tell you what I think would be lovely: to give your Aunt Eleanor a surprise. It would be lovely for us to go in there together, and for you to go to her and put your arms around her and kiss her."

"Oh, I say!" protested the boy.

"Think how it would comfort her and make her

happy," went on Frances. "Love is such a great power; and she is very sad, and none of the rest of us can do so much for her as you can."

"Can't you?" A faint awakening of interest greeted this declaration. Sir William Hereford, even in his present embryotic condition, enjoyed excelling in any situation.

"Nobody. You have the most power of all, because she loves you best. Now, we can leave the board just as it is and come out after a few minutes and finish the game; but don't let Miss Hereford think you 're in a hurry to come away, will you?"

"Why not? I am."

"Because you want to be so kind to her, and it might make her feel unhappy to know that you were in a hurry to leave her."

"What a lot of things you think of!" said Billy, watching his companion wonderingly.

As the two rose and passed from sight, the housekeeper incautiously revealed herself at the window.

Sanders saw her. "Did n't I say true, Mrs. Graves?" he called triumphantly. "Is n't Sir William the meekest, mildest, woolliest lamb that hever you saw?"

"Humph!" said Miss Miranda grudgingly. "Maybe; but you scratch that wool and you 'll find pretty soon that it 's clothing a wolf."

"Just a little patience, Mrs. Graves. 'Er 'ighness 'as n't 'ad 'im a week. I 'm that dazed with what she 's done halready that I 'm looking to see 'im sheep clear through to the bone before long.

She leads 'im now just as if she 'd got a blue ribbon around 'is neck."

As Frances and her companion stopped before Miss Hereford's door and knocked, the girl thought of the different manner in which Billy had last made his appearance here.

A voice within bade them enter. Miss Hereford was propped up with pillows in a reclining chair, and her eyes bore the marks of recent tears. She looked eagerly toward her nephew.

Frances's earnest explanations and suggestions had given Billy a degree of comprehension of his aunt's expression. Her wistful eyes discovered the new look in his handsome face. "My darling boy!" she said, and though her lips trembled, she forbore from weeping lest it repulse him.

He advanced to her chair and stood there, letting her cling with both her little hands to his big one.

"I 'm very sorry, Aunt Eleanor, because my father died and made you feel bad. I hope you won't cry about it, because I 'm Sir William now, and I know a lots of things that I did n't used to. I know all about Love, and how he makes me stop playing draughts and come in here when I don't want to, and — and — I 'll kiss you. Shall I?"

"My precious child!" Miss Hereford pressed the hand she held to her cheek and swallowed hard as the big boy stooped and kissed her forehead.

"The princess comes up only to my ear, but she knows such a lot," went on Billy, looking around at Frances.

"Yes, dear, so she does," returned Miss Hereford tremulously. "It is a good thing she can reach your ear, Billy, so she can speak into it and tell you all these wonderful things, is n't it, dear?"

"Yes." The boy's brown eyes had a perplexed, pitying look as he regarded his aunt. "The princess is always happy, Aunt Eleanor. I wish you were happy. Let her tell you things, too."

"Sit down, both of you," said Miss Hereford. "I should so like to have the princess make me happy; for my path is rough, darling — rough."

"That 's it!" he answered eagerly. "She knows about that. Tell her," to Frances, "about climbing the hill."

Frances seated herself beside him. "Billy is interested in thinking about the hill of life, and the good Shepherd, Love, who leads us every day and makes us brave when we come to the hard places. Only we must listen for his voice, or else other things drown it so we can't hear. That is what Billy gave me this ring for," holding out her hand, "to make me remember to listen; and I gave him one."

Billy exhibited it proudly. Suddenly a thought seemed to strike him. "I don't believe Aunt Eleanor remembers to listen!" he exclaimed. "That 's why her eyes get red. Let us make her a ring!"

Miss Hereford's gaze was still resting on him. Amazement was in her face. "Yes, Billy, yes," she said softly, "perhaps I do need it."

"There 's a song about it," he went on earnestly. "Sing it to her, Princess."

He left his hand in its gentle captivity while Frances sang the song, and Miss Hereford listened, her wistful, wondering look wandering back and forth between the two young faces.

"There!" said Billy triumphantly, when it was finished. "I dare say the princess would teach you that."

"Ah, it is a good song," responded Miss Hereford. "'All the rugged way,'" she repeated. "Yes, rugged, rugged."

"But," Frances reminded her gently, "'I will follow and *rejoice* all the rugged way.'"

"That 's it," said Billy eagerly, "that 's what the princess knows, that you don't know. She knows how to rejoice."

A lump rose in Miss Hereford's throat as she met the soft light in his eyes.

"I believe the princess does know a lot of things, Billy," she answered slowly. "I 'll learn of her, dear; I 'll learn of her."

CHAPTER XVIII

AN INTERRUPTED GAME

LAURA JEWETT drove to the village as usual the following morning for the mail, and it was there that she learned of the changes that had come to the household at Waterview. Her driver Michael was the mouthpiece through which the information reached her.

Her dark eyes were dancing with excitement when she came home to her mother.

"He 's a lord, mother — that young bear!" she announced, hastening into the room. "Oh," regretfully, "why is n't it Mr. Burling! How well he would look the part! He has gone away; went to New York day before yesterday."

"Alone?" asked Mrs. Jewett.

"Yes, so they say; but I suppose they will all go. Miss Hereford's brother has died, and it seems he was Somebody, and now the son is Somebody in his place; but though I questioned Michael until he agreed that Mr. Burling must be 'soom sart iv a barr'net,' I believe gossip does n't attempt to give him any title at all, which is awfully shabby, considering how much better he deserves it than the other one."

"Poor Frances left alone there!" said Mrs.

Jewett; and quickly added, "There is nothing to fear."

Laura shrugged her shoulders. "It is a rather creepy position to be in. I don't know that I envy her the honor of breaking the prince's spell. Well, I suppose he will soon be spirited away from her. What a mortification for those people to appear at the — the — oh, I hope it 's a castle — with such an heir! Meanwhile, mother, please do remember that you live next 'door to a Title, and don't go flirting with the Title's housekeeper and her relations. Let 's live up to our privileges for once!"

"Miss Graves is a very nice, sensible woman, and she and Frances are very fond of each other," said Mrs. Jewett abstractedly.

"I have n't a doubt of it," returned Laura plaintively. "You 've told me so before, and I thought it was highly laudable, and I think so now. Let them agree in their little nest and we will agree in ours."

"I feel as if I wanted to go right over to see how Frances is getting on," said Mrs. Jewett, "but she could send one of the servants if she needed me, I suppose."

"I should think you would feel more like going to inquire for Miss Hereford in her bereavement," remarked Laura accusingly. "There is no one else likely to do it, and she alone in a strange land, — even Mr. Burling gone."

"That is true. Perhaps it would be kind."

"We might as well go now," said Laura, jumping up. "I 'll tell Michael not to unharness."

When mother and daughter reached Waterview, Mrs. Jewett asked to see Miss Hereford's maid, and Dudley responded to the summons.

Mrs. Jewett explained that they had but just learned the sad news from England and wished to inquire for Miss Hereford; and the maid replied that her mistress would be very much obliged to them, but that she had a headache this morning and could not see any one.

Mrs. Jewett asked the maid to deliver a message of sympathy, and then inquired if they might see Miss Rogers.

Laura's sharp eyes noted the change in the woman's face as her chin lifted.

"Certainly. She is out in the pagoda. Shall I call her, or will the ladies prefer to go to her?"

"We will go to her," replied Mrs. Jewett. "Good-morning."

"Oh, dear!" exclaimed Laura discontentedly, as they moved over the soft turf in the direction of the summer-house.

Mrs. Jewett could not resist a little gurgle of laughter. "We 've lost caste with an English lady's maid!" she said. "What shall we do?"

"And for such a nobody!" responded her daughter, giving rein to her annoyance. "Of course they will all be hurrying off to England soon, and I would like them to feel very friendly to us. How do you know but they might ask us to visit them if you would n't insist on giving the impression that if they did, we should yearn to spend all our time in the servants' hall?"

"Laura! Laura!" protested Mrs. Jewett, still laughing.

The girl kept an injured silence until they reached the pagoda. Before they rounded its corner they heard voices; and when the interior came into view they saw Frances and the young man whose name was in the mouths of the village gossips seated, one each side of the table, engrossed in a game of cards. Near by sat Sanders reading the morning paper. The air was full of the sparkle and song of early summer.

It was Mrs. Jewett's first sight of the heir of the house, and she, like everybody else, was impressed by the interesting contour of the head and face, which he lifted at their appearance. His bright expression clouded at once, and he stared in disapproving silence, while Frances sprang from the table with a glad exclamation.

Sanders dropped his paper and stood back, and his master slowly rose with reluctant, mechanical civility.

After the first happy greeting Frances remembered her companion, and seeing his lowering brow, hastened to speak.

"These are some dear friends of mine," she said. "It makes me so happy to see them. This is Mrs. Jewett, and this is her daughter, Miss Jewett. I want you to know them both. And this is Mr. Hereford, ladies. Come in and sit down."

Frances, in her gladness to be again with Mrs. Jewett, seated herself close beside her, while Laura, smiling sweetly upon the heir of Ardleigh,

took the place Frances had vacated. Sir William slowly lowered himself into the opposite seat. There was a tumult of impatience in his breast, but he was constraining himself with a novel effort. The intrusion of these people had made the princess happy: he must bear it for a time.

"You were playing cards," said Laura brightly. "What game is it?"

"Cribbage," responded her companion gloomily. "It is a new game. She began teaching it to me yesterday. It is very hard to learn."

"He looks as if he would like to jump across the table and swallow me," thought the girl. "How can Miss Rogers endure it? Surely she earns her money."

"I love to play cards," she remarked effusively, "and I like cribbage immensely. Some day when you have learned I hope you will play it with me."

His dark eyes fell before her laughing glance, and he nervously turned the glass ring on his finger as he kept silence.

"What a pretty ring!" said Laura. "I saw you making them one day. Did you make that?"

"No, the princess made it."

Laura opened her pretty eyes. "Who?"

"The princess." The young fellow's longing glance in the direction of Frances left no doubt of his meaning.

"Oh, of course."

"I made her one, too. They are remembering rings. They make us remember to — to be kind, because — Love is the only Power." The speaker's

eyes came back to Laura's bright, wondering ones. "That is the reason I bear it to have you sit there — in the princess's place," he finished gloomily.

Meanwhile Frances was talking fast and low with Mrs. Jewett, telling first of all her good news.

"They want Science!" she said softly. "They asked for it. It makes everything bearable."

"Ah, Frances, dear child!"

The two regarded each other radiantly.

"But this news?" asked Mrs. Jewett after the pause. "They will have to go to England, I suppose, but he will be taken care of. There are plenty of Scientists there."

Frances shook her head. "They won't go," she said simply, "because they think they can't take him away from me. Mr. Burling is in New York now, cabling and arranging."

Mrs. Jewett looked in surprise at the girl who was apparently so unconscious that there was anything strange in her own importance.

"They would n't dare to try to take him yet," she went on. "They don't know the strength of Science; but I see myself that if they can stay it will be easier and better for them."

"The young man has an important place to fill in the world, I hear."

"Yes, they tell me so, and to think, Mrs. Jewett," the girl's face grew radiant again, "at last, after all their struggles, Divine Principle has led them to the fountain of" —

A crash made the absorbed pair start. The table at the other side of the pavilion was sud-

denly overset, the cards floated or flew to the floor, and Laura Jewett was seen shrinking against a wooden upright in the wall.

With two strides Billy was beside Frances, breathing fast, his nostrils dilated, his face and eyes flaming.

He grasped the girl's shoulder. "It 's not true what she says — the giggling one! It 's not true! She says I am to leave you; that they will take me away to England! You are cheating me, then!" With an unexpected moyement he caught Frances up in his arms and held her close to his breast, while he glared into her pale face.

Laura Jewett stared in speechless terror. Her mother's eyes were closed. Sanders, his mouth open, wrung his hands undecidedly, in the background where he stood.

"I won't bear it!" stormed the boy, beside himself. "I 'll drown myself first, and you, too! Are you cheating me? Say! Oh, Princess, Princess!" An agony of reproach altered his voice, and great tears suddenly dimmed his hot eyes and splashed upon Frances's gown.

"It is a mistake, Billy," she said, at the first pause. "Put me down, so that we can talk. You know I would n't cheat you."

"The giggling one" — he began brokenly. Then he paused and replaced the girl in the chair. Sinking beside her on his knees, he buried his face in her lap and wept like a child.

Frances's hands trembled from embarrassment as well as shock; but the sobs that shook the big

shoulders moved her heart, and she laid her hand timidly on the thick, dark hair.

"Miss Jewett thought you must go home because your father has died," she said in gentle explanation, "but she was mistaken."

"She s-said our rings — rings — were to re-remember each — other!" sobbed the young fellow in abandonment of grief.

"No. They are to help us remember the good Shepherd. Stop, Billy! You must be quiet, for you know we must always be listening for His voice." Frances patted the crisp, dark hair until the head lay quiet in her lap. Then she went on.

"If the Shepherd called us to walk in a rugged way, we should want to follow and rejoice, don't you remember? But now He does n't ask you to leave me. We are to stay together. I shall never deceive you, Billy; be sure of that."

The young fellow, tenderly guarded for so many years, had no self-consciousness or fear of ridicule, whatever might be his mood or humor. Now he lifted his tear-stained face, and turned with the unconsciousness of a child of five to where the younger visitor still leaned against the support.

"You hear, do you?" he asked.

"I 'm very sorry I made such a mistake," replied Laura unsteadily, not being at all sure what sudden retribution might follow at the hands of her host, and regretful that she had not retreated while he was preoccupied.

"I must n't say you cannot come again," said the young fellow, rising to his feet and resting

his hand upon Frances's chair, while his speech was interrupted by a catching in the throat, "because it made the princess glad to see you; but I need not believe anything you say another time."

"I shall be careful what I say, you may be sure," returned Laura, relieved, and regaining somewhat her self-possession. "Mother, we interrupted a game. Let us excuse ourselves."

Mrs. Jewett rose and with a kindly smile held out her hand to the young man.

"I hope you and the princess will come to see us some day," she said. He took her hand for a moment and dropped it.

"My little girl," she turned to Frances, whose still face showed the effect of the recent tempest, "let us see all of you that we can." She put her arm around her friend's shoulders, and was surprised to have Billy gently but firmly push it off. The lady looked up at him questioningly.

"She does n't like to be touched," he explained.

Mrs. Jewett raised her eyebrows and smiled. "You seemed to forget that a few minutes ago."

"Yes. I forgot everything. I am sorry. The princess will forgive me after you 're gone. You 're going right away, are n't you?"

"Yes, and how sorry I am!" said Frances sadly.

"Why?" demanded Billy.

"Because I love Mrs. Jewett."

"Why?"

"Because," the girl smiled at her friend, "because she knows the good Shepherd, and always

does kind things to everybody." As she paused Frances leaned forward and kissed Mrs. Jewett.

Billy watched the movement closely. "Does n't she mind?" he asked.

"No," returned Frances quietly, still smiling into her friend's eyes. "We are fond of each other."

"Are you going to kiss the other one?" asked the boy, as Laura advanced, smoothing her gloves. "I would n't."

"We don't know each other so well," returned Frances genially, holding out her hand to the girl. "I am so sorry you have been annoyed," she added.

"Don't mention it. If you can forgive me for precipitating storms and wrecking furniture and cards, I am sure there is nothing for me to do but learn wisdom by experience."

Laura shook hands conventionally as she made her airy speech, and Billy read the wistful signs in his princess's face.

"They can stay if you want them to," he said hastily, "and I can go to sleep in the hammock until they have gone."

Frances shook her head. "No. We have n't made them have a happy enough time to wish to stay. Next time we will do better, I hope."

"Where are you going?" demanded the boy, for Frances had moved out on the grass with her guests.

"I am going with these ladies to their carriage."

"Sanders, you may pick up the cards and ar-

range the table. We shall want it again soon." This was the last the visitors heard as they left the pagoda.

"It is a great improvement that he makes no objection to my leaving," said Frances softly, as she crossed the grass with her friends.

"Of course there is improvement," replied Mrs. Jewett, "and there will be. It will come faster and faster."

Laura shrugged her shoulders. "All I know is, I would n't do it for twice the money, whatever they give you," she declared. In her character of attractive maiden, her pride had been deeply injured by the young man's persistent aversion to her, now that one girl had been admitted to his good graces. Moreover, her nerves were still quivering from fright.

"It is n't a question of money," replied Frances quietly. "It is too evidently my work for me to refuse it. That is all."

After the parting, and as the carriage drove away, Miss Jewett did not incline to talk. Her mother finally spoke. "That class baby of mine turns out to be more important than the lady's maid, after all."

"To the heir of the house, certainly. Bah! What a position!"

"To all of them, my dear. Mr. Burling went to New York simply to make arrangements so that they need not leave her. The household are hanging their hopes upon her. They have asked for Science treatment. It is plain to be seen that if

they do return to the ancestral halls they will try to take her with them."

Laura's eyes grew large and thoughtful. She had certainly seen enough to enable her to understand something of the situation.

CHAPTER XIX

SANDERS'S ACCOUNT

THOSE were anxious days that Maurice Burling spent in New York, especially since he was detained far longer than he had thought possible. In spite of the reassuring answers which Harvey gave to his queries when finally he was driving home from the station one evening, he was not satisfied until, his nephew being safely in bed, he could send for Sanders and ask for an account.

"Things is going beautiful, sir," declared Sanders. "Sir William is has keen as hever habout the princess."

"That is good," replied Burling. "We will drop Sir William's title for the present. We are going to remain in America for a time, and we will call as little attention as possible to Mr. William. Address him as you always have done. It will be better. Then there has been no outbreak in my absence, eh?"

"There was one hoccasion, Mr. Burling, when I wished with hall my 'eart that you 'ad been 'ere. The ladies from Windermere were calling. They came hout to the pagoda where Sir — Mr. William and the princess were playing cribbage."

"Playing cribbage!"

"Yes, sir. I think 'er 'ighness wished to see if Mr. William could hadd figgers, sir. Well, 'e 's slow, but she 'elps 'im, and if it was to walk hon 'is 'ands, and the princess said 'walk,' 'e 'd try it, sir."

"Very well. Go on, Sanders. The ladies came, and what did Mr. William do?"

"'E was quiet and well be'aved has you 'd hask, sir, till the young lady, Miss Jewett, 'appened to say to 'im she supposed 'e 'd soon 'ave to leave the princess and go 'ome."

Sanders rolled his eyes reminiscently.

"Well?" demanded Burling.

"I can scarce tell what it was like, Mr. Burling. 'E flew into a tantrum, Mr. William did. There was an hupsetting of chairs and tables, and 'e caught the princess in 'is harms has she was a baby, and then took hon terrible. I 'ope I 'm an hordinarily brave man, Mr. Burling, but when Mr. William snatched 'er hup and talked of drowning, my knees went hunder me, sir. I hexpected nothing but 'e 'd run with her. If 'e 'ad — well," Sanders gave his head a shake, "what could I 'ave done, Mr. Burling?"

"You could have gone for Harvey, and both followed him. Had n't you sense enough for that?" Burling's brows were drawn. "What did take place?"

"She talked to 'im — 'er 'ighness did — soft as an hangel, and 'e broke down, and when I could see straight hagain 'e was kneeling with 'is 'ead in 'er lap, sobbing. The first time hever Mr. William shed tears in my presence, Mr. Burling."

"Ah!" Maurice breathed a sigh of relief. "I think Miss Jewett will have had enough of visits to that pagoda," he said, as if to himself. "Were the ladies much frightened, Sanders?"

"They were, sir. Mrs. Jewett, she 'ad 'er heyes closed, and I think she was faint; and the young lady clung to the wall to keep 'erself from falling."

"Did they go directly, Sanders?"

"Yes, sir, as soon as hever Mr. William stopped crying."

Burling heaved a long sigh, and rising, took a few turns up and down the room while the man waited in respectful silence. At last Maurice paused and spoke.

"This is very hard on Miss Rogers, Sanders."

"Quite so, sir; but hif you 'll excuse me, sir, I think she 's henlisted for the war."

"What?"

"I think, sir, that no matter 'ow cut hup she may feel, she won't desert. She won't show the white feather, sir. Hif she did — hif she should go away — I 'ope I 'm an hordinarily brave" —

"Yes, yes; but we must save her all we can, Sanders."

"Quite so; but we 're zeros, we are, — if you 'll hexcuse my making so free, Mr. Burling. Hall we can do is to fall into line and follow 'er lead."

"Ha! You 've got that far, have you? And what does she seem to be accomplishing? Anything?"

"Well," — Sanders's eyes sought the ceiling, — "when I look back three weeks, say, Mr. Burling,

and then try to take it in that that Mr. William and this Mr. William are one and the same person, it sets me thinking, Mr. Burling, that 's what it does. I go in every morning now and find the young man quite cock-a-hoop and ready to talk, and never an ugly word hout of 'is 'ead. 'E 's hall for getting ready for the morning lesson."

"Has she begun to teach him?" asked Burling eagerly.

"Yes, she did, sir, yesterday; but that is n't what I meant. It 's 'er lesson hout of the Bible and 'er hother religious books that we 'ave hevery morning, and then I 've to go hoff and stay for an hour while she — I don't know what she does." Sanders lowered his voice. "You said I was to do heverything the princess hordered, so I go. But I 'll be honest with you, Mr. Burling — I don't know what she does while I 'm away; but for myself," impressively, "I 'ave hevery confidence in the princess, hin spite of what Mr. William says."

"What does Mr. William say?" Burling paused again in his walk.

"Why, I hasked 'im, sir, why the princess wanted me to go away hevery morning and what she did while I was gone — I thought that was honly right, Mr. Burling."

"It was wrong. What did he tell you?"

"'E said — but, mind you, Mr. Burling, it did n't shake my confidence in the princess's motives. I 've seen enough of that lady to 'old against the 'ole world that she 's a 'igh-minded young woman."

"Well, out with it!"

"'E answered, Mr. William did, that in my habsence she — the princess — treated 'im."

Maurice's drawn brow relaxed and he laughed softly.

Sanders sniffed. "I 've signed the pledge myself," he said righteously. "I don't know what she gives 'im, and I did n't hask; but I thought it honly right you should know it, for being honly an hunderling, hall I can do is to hobey horders; but you know 'ow careful we 've kept hintoxicants away."

"All right, Sanders, all right. You are quite correct not to let this prejudice you against the lady."

"Yes, sir. The more so that my conscience drove me to look through a crack at the back of the pagoda, and I could n't see sign of heven a glass. There was honly the princess sitting there with 'er 'and over 'er heyes, and Mr. William reading in the book she 'ad you to send 'im, sir, patient and mild has a lamb. I lingered for some time, but that 's the way it went hon: Mr. William yawning sometimes fit to swallow the book, but never speaking to 'er."

"That is one way of treating, Sanders; and I hope with all my heart that it may go to Mr. William's head. Don't speak of this to Dudley or to any one else. You had no business to spy upon the princess, and if you speak of what you saw you lose your place, — do you understand?"

"Well, sir, I 'ope" — began the astonished man.

"So do I. Now go on. Tell me anything else that has occurred. What do you think of these morning lessons, Sanders?"

"They 're nice and short, sir, and the singing is sweeter than birds. The princess is better than 'alf you 'ear in the music 'alls."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, sir. Days when it rains she 'as us in to the piano. She 'as a 'ymnal, and I wish you 'd 'ear 'er songs. Mr. William never minds the rain now. There is one song habout 'arpstrings, Mr. Burling. It would be worth your while to 'ear it. It was hafter the singing yesterday that she talked to Mr. William habout 'is studies. She 'as an hastonishing way with 'er — the princess 'as. She just leads hup to what she wants to say, playing in a way with Mr. William, huntil by the time she 's ready to make 'im do something, 'e 's hall ready to do it."

"I have n't a doubt of it," said Burling. "The princess is a woman. Well, Sanders, anything more?"

"Plenty more to-morrow, no doubt, sir."

"Ah, to be continued in our next, eh?"

"That 's habout it, sir."

"Good-night, then, Sanders."

"Good-night, sir."

The account was on the whole cheering. Miss Hereford's was still more so, and Burling sought Miss Graves's piazza next morning in a relieved frame of mind.

He caught sight of Miss Miranda through the open window.

"Home again, you see, Miss Graves," he said pleasantly.

"And it 's where you 'd better stay, Mr. Burling," she replied, coming to the window. "You took risks."

"It seemed necessary ; and your niece said 'Go,' else I should not have gone alone."

"Ask me next time," suggested Miss Miranda, with a rather grim smile. She had not been told of the scene on the day of the Jewetts' call, or the smile would have been missing.

"Nothing wrong, I hope ?" asked Maurice.

"No. The wind has been tempered to the shorn lamb. Frances seems shorn of her common sense and to have something uncommon in its place. I 'd feel full as easy if you would n't take her advice about things. Her head 's in the clouds, you know."

"H 'm, yes ; but she seems to see something up there that is beyond our vision. Miss Hereford tells me a great and good work is going on."

"Well," returned Miss Graves doubtfully, "I shall be very glad for you ; but I set just as much store by my niece as you do by your nephew, and until he 's improved a good deal I 'd feel easier to have you stay by."

"I sympathize in that sentiment. Only necessity took me away. May I see Miss Rogers ?"

"I 'll send her out," responded Miss Miranda, and in a few moments Frances appeared.

From the back of the room the housekeeper saw through the window the pink-gowned figure emerge

upon the piazza, and saw Burling's face as he greeted her.

"Land sakes!" she said to herself in a startled tone. She straightened an already straight lamp mat, then she slowly and cautiously looked up and out again. The two were seated and talking, and Burling's back was now toward the watcher. She resisted the temptation to hear what they were saying, and walked into the next room. "What 's the use of a man looking at a girl like that, — as if he thought the sun rose in her head and set in her heels?" she soliloquized uneasily. "Suppose Frances should take notions! What on earth should I do? They 're all disguised folks, anyway. This Mr. Burling may be cousin to the Prince of Wales, for all we know. His eyes are kind of pop, I 've noticed. I should n't be a mite surprised if he was. Look out, Frances Rogers! A bead coronet is the only kind you 'll ever wear! You poor little young one, whatever made me ask you down here, anyway!"

Meanwhile Frances, in girlish serenity, was talking with her visitor. "You found a very warm welcome in New York."

"Whew! It was fierce. The thermometer had n't budged when I left; but I had n't time to think of weather. I think I 've lost a few pounds, but that was anxiety, not heat."

"What?" Frances smiled. "In spite of the daily telegram you made me send you?"

"Ah, but you see I had to consider the source of that."

"Indeed!" The girl straightened up and laughed.

"But all 's well that ends well; and Aunt Eleanor is full of the boy's improvement. Sanders tells me you 're making a good Scientist of Billy — these morning lessons, and so on. I suspect, however, the boy would listen if you read him Sanskrit."

"No, you 're all wrong, Mr. Burling. You seldom see a child who does n't like to have the Bible read to him; and you never can find a child who questions the truths of Christian Science. To them it seems nothing strange that there is a God and that He is omnipotent Goodness. It is hard for a grown person to put aside intellectual pride and become as a little child, as we all must to gain clear vision. Your nephew has an advantage; he has little to unlearn."

"And you see a change in the boy since you began these treatments?" asked Maurice, half eagerly, half curiously.

"Of course," answered Frances simply.

"In what way? Tell me all you can."

"I 'm going to ask you not to question me. It is a hindrance to voice error."

Maurice regarded her inquiringly.

"I strive to think of your nephew only as God sees him," she explained. "I cannot serve two masters. In God's sight he is already all that you desire him to be."

Burling nodded reflectively. "I don't understand you in the least," he remarked, "but as

Sanders very truthfully stated, we are all Tommy Atkinses and you are commander-in-chief."

Frances smiled. "Good Sanders! I certainly shall have no mutiny from him."

"Nor from me, your highness. Are you going to have your sermon, or lesson, or reading, or whatever it is, this morning?"

"Yes."

"May the unenlightened attend?"

"Certainly."

"Sanders tells me you have a — a séance with Billy alone after it."

"Yes, I give him present treatments now. Mr. Burling, you are aware that the tender solicitude that has always guarded your nephew has prevented his having the least consciousness or fear of ridicule. I suppose I can trust you not to comment in any jocose vein upon what you may not understand in our methods?"

Burling's imperturbable face flushed to his ears, and his eyes shone. "Do you take me for such a stupid and ungrateful idiot!" he exclaimed.

CHAPTER XX

THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE

SCARCELY had he replied, when the tall figure of Sir William Hereford, followed at a little distance by Sanders, was seen approaching the piazza.

Maurice Burling's heart leaped with a painful, vague mixture of hope and fear. Was he really to see a sign, or were these sanguine women — one made optimistic by her love, and the other by her mysticism — misled?

"Good-morning, Billy," he said, advancing to meet the newcomer, with a face still flushed from the stir within him.

"Good-morning, Maurice." The young fellow smiled as he shook his uncle's hand. "Sanders said you had come home;" but swiftly the brown eyes glanced by Burling's face and rested on Frances. "Good-morning, Princess." He jumped lightly up the piazza step and clasped the girl's hand for a second.

"Good-morning, Billy. Waterview looks very cool and comfortable to Mr. Burling this morning. You remember we noticed in the papers how hot it has been in New York."

"Yes." The boy turned back to his uncle. "Was it very bad, Maurice?"

"Indeed it was. Pretty warm here, too, I fancy, but it is at least fresh."

"And it is n't any matter about the heat, either." The young fellow gave Frances a knowing look, and she nodded. "Maurice will understand sometime," he added in an undertone.

"Certainly," she replied. "He wishes to come to our reading this morning."

"All right, you may come, Maurice. Ready, Princess?"

"Please go on. I will get the books."

Billy slipped his arm through his uncle's, and together they walked toward the pagoda, Sanders following.

"Are you quick at learning songs, Maurice?"

"I 'm afraid not, old man."

"Because there 's one you 'll want to learn when you hear it, eh, Sanders?"

"That 'e will, Mr. William."

"I 'm very quick at learning them, the princess says."

"You always were quick at music, Billy. You used to sing a lot. Don't you remember?"

"Did I? I suppose so; but I don't care now for what I did before it grew dark."

"What?" Burling's heart-beats began to hasten.

"Yes." The boy gave a short, uncomfortable laugh. "Nor while it was dark." He shrugged his shoulders as if to throw off an harassing incubus. "I don't care to remember what I did while it was dark, either. It grew light when the princess came. She says I'm not to think about

the darkness; because you see how it is yourself, Maurice, darkness is n't anything. If you bring a light into a dark room the dark disappears; that 's all." The young fellow snapped his fingers. "It has n't gone anywhere, because it was n't anything. You only thought it was something while you were in the dark. The princess says I 've found the light now, and so I 'm safe to be happy forever. Did you ever feel it dark, Maurice — I mean, inside of you?"

"Many and many a time, Billy," answered Burling slowly.

"Well, you need n't again. The princess will teach you about God. God is the Light. It 's very interesting. Is n't it, Sanders?"

"That it is, Mr. William."

"He made us, you know; and of course He would n't if He had n't loved us, because He 's just nothing but Goodness and Love, and so of course He takes care of us every minute just the way a shepherd takes care of his sheep; and even when we have hard times all we have to do is to remember Him, and then everything comes right again. It 's very interesting the way the princess tells it, is n't it, Sanders?"

"That it is, Mr. William."

"It is very interesting the way you tell it, Billy," said Maurice gravely. "The dark inside of me grows brighter while you talk."

"Then I 'm glad," returned the boy, "for the dark is wretchedness. How did I live in it?" The brightness died from his face as his eyes grew thoughtful.

"You did n't," said Frances with quiet cheerfulness, suddenly joining them where they stood waiting. "Error deceived you for a little while, — nothing but error. You must be like a little Christian Science child whom I know. She felt a pain and she just turned on it. She said: 'You 're nothing but error. I know what you are, and I know what you ain't are!'"

Laughing, they all entered the pagoda, and on the table, from which the bead boxes had disappeared, Frances spread out her books. Burling took a chair at a little distance and, resting his arms on his knees, bowed his head in his hands. His nephew rocked gently in the hammock.

"The light is dawning on Billy's darkness. The light is dawning on Billy's darkness." The thought surged back and forth through Burling's brain while Frances read, with such an exciting accompaniment of contingencies and hopes that no word of those that fell from her lips penetrated his consciousness. His sister's face rose clearly before him, sad and wistful.

"God is good," he thought with passionate gratitude. "How little we conceded to win this help, and how reluctantly! God is good!"

His wandering, excited thoughts were at last stilled by a familiar line. Frances had begun to repeat the Lord's Prayer; Billy and Sanders, their heads bowed, were saying it with her, and Burling, more thoughtfully than he had ever in his life spoken those sacred lines, joined his voice to theirs.

When it was finished, Billy looked up at his princess expectantly.

"Which shall it be this morning?" she asked.

"Oh, Maurice has n't heard any of them, so of course he must hear 'Shepherd, show me how to go,' and you sing it alone this time, Princess."

"I 'd rather not, Billy," she returned, smiling and flushing a little. "Such a large audience. Don't you think it is much nicer — more like church — for us to sing it together?"

"Ho, you need n't be afraid of old Maurice; but if you are, I 'll sing it with you."

So the two fresh young voices — Billy's easy baritone coming ringingly from his broad chest — sang the hymn, and Burling, his face rather pale, looked off among the summer trees to the water while he listened.

When they had finished, Billy looked up for his uncle's approval, and the latter nodded and rose.

"I thank you very much for admitting me this morning," he said. "The song is a good one, Billy, and I like to hear your voice again."

The young fellow put out his hand. "Sit down a minute more, please, Maurice."

Burling obeyed, looking at the speaker questioningly. Each word his nephew spoke in this novel, civil, collected manner aroused his wondering interest.

"I 'm glad you 've come home, for I was thinking in the night of you, and wanting to ask you some questions. How old am I, Maurice?"

The dark eyes with the appealing droop at the corners — Mary's eyes — regarded him.

"Twenty-one, Billy."

The boy looked around at Frances. "How old are you, Princess?" he asked seriously.

"Twenty."

The young fellow winced. "I was afraid so," he said, through his teeth.

"Why afraid, Billy?" she asked.

Large tears welled up in his eyes as they looked at her.

"It is n't fair that you should know so much more than I do, and be younger." He suddenly turned upon his uncle. "Why is it so, Maurice?" he asked accusingly.

Burling's face gave no sign of the way his heart was beating.

"You were very ill when you were a little chap, Billy. You could n't study, you see," he answered.

"And then I was in the dark," said the boy. "Whose fault was it that I was in the dark, so long — so long?"

Burling's face, from being flushed, grew very pale at the mournful cry. "Ah!" he ejaculated acutely. "I hope it was nobody's fault, boy! If it was any one's it was" —

"No one's. No one's," cried Frances quickly. She went on slowly. "Billy, what does it matter whether I am older or younger? You are no longer in that dark that was only a lie. We are living in eternity now. Time does n't matter.

You are in the light. You reflect all intelligence. No error can keep you out of knowing all the truth you long for. The Bible says, 'Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.' Remember that. Divine Love meets all our needs. It is meeting yours, and you must have not one fear or regret that you have lost anything."

The young fellow, drinking in her words, watched her, his teeth still set. Suddenly again he turned to his uncle.

"Maurice, where were you and what were you doing at my age?"

Visions of a flowery quadrangle at Oxford flashed through Burling's mind.

"I was lying on cushions in a punt on the Cherwell River, reading a book and gliding under the heavy branches, a good deal of the time," he answered, with a faint smile.

Billy only looked at him, his lips trembling.

"Maurice, I am a man, and I don't know so much as this girl, who comes up only to my ear. She — she — Oh, Princess," — the depth of the wound suddenly revealed itself, — "you are too kind to let me see it, but in your heart you despise me!" He buried his face in his hands, and Sanders, forgotten in the background, blew his nose softly and stealthily.

"Why, Billy — Billy!" she said with cheery reassurance. "I am glad this thought was uncovered, for now we can banish it into nothingness. There are things I should despise a man for, but you have n't one of them."

The ears, crimson under the close-cropped, crisp brown hair, were eagerly listening to the sweet voice, though the face continued covered.

"You are no more to blame for being deceived by error than you are for having brown eyes. The great point is that now it is over. You let me advise you, Billy, don't you, even though I do come up only to your ear?"

A muffled assent came from behind the hands.

"You see, I've been studying all these years, and so there are things I can teach you now every day that will prepare you to study with some man who knows far more than I do, when we all go away from here."

The hands came down quickly. "You will leave me!" ejaculated the young fellow, this thought submerging even the first mortification of his life.

Frances smiled into his startled eyes.

"We shall both do what is right," she answered, "when the time comes."

Burling laid his hand on his nephew's shoulder. "There is one very pleasant thing for you to learn, old man: it means a great deal to be Sir William Hereford. You can come or go or study or travel when and where you like."

The boy looked from one to the other of his companions as if digesting this thought.

"I choose to study," he said at last, vehemently.

"Good," returned Burling, with a nod; "but you and the princess must not have all work and no play."

Billy bit his lip. Some remembrance seemed

suddenly to sting him; and his eyes fell to the bead ring he wore. Impulsively he pulled at it.

"Please, Billy, please!" exclaimed Frances. Her unaccustomed touch on his arm made the young fellow pause, and meeting her eyes, he saw them swimming.

"These rings are very precious to me," she said quickly.

"But we can't wear them — we can't!" he responded breathlessly.

"Then let me keep them both. They are not to be despised. They were little torches of truth to us, Billy."

"To us — us!" he repeated bitterly. "You are very good to me, Princess." But he pulled off the glass circlet carefully and dropped it into her outstretched hand.

"Billy has never cared much for sports," said Burling, addressing Frances, "but you are both going to support the frivolous old uncle at last in his favorite amusement. I brought with me a set of golf clubs for each of you."

"How delightful!" exclaimed the girl, in genuine pleasure.

"Have I time, Princess?" asked Billy gravely and doubtfully.

She flashed him a bright look full of courage.

"You have eternity," she answered.

CHAPTER XXI

THE FIRST STEPS

It was in the early stages of their nephew's realization of his own lack and limitations that Miss Hereford and Maurice Burling had most cause for gratitude to their guest. Her fair, wholesome, cheerful youth, her spiritual faith, and that beneficent power which she wielded — a power which they could not understand, and could still less deny — combined to guide their nephew over the delicate and swaying bridge which led from a hopeless labyrinth of irresponsible moods to the solid ground of intelligent intention.

More and more they stood in the background, more and more they looked to Frances to lead, now that there was no longer an overgrown child to coax and soothe, but a wounded consciousness to be consoled and encouraged.

Even with his uncle and aunt the young Sir William now showed an inclination to shrink and be silent. It has been recorded that when an operation on the eyes of one long blind restores the sight, the first effect is not of added but of diminished courage. That old world in which the afflicted one moved with such confidence has vanished, and instead a hundred hitherto unsuspected

objects cause the new-born faculty to doubt and fear and move with caution. The heir of Ardleigh had discovered the nakedness of his mental equipment and was ashamed.

"'E 's that mild, sir, these days, it goes to my 'eart," Sanders confided to Mr. Burling a few days after the scenes of the last chapter; "and 'e 's hall for his book. 'E 'd study 'imself into a fever hif it were n't for the princess. No more naps for 'im in the afternoon, and hexcept the princess likes to play golf, I 'm thinking you 'd not get 'im over there to the links, sir."

Burling assented. He knew also that Frances needed not to affect an interest in the game. She entered into this new pleasure with the usual absorption of its votaries, and Billy's rare smile came most willingly when her hearty laugh rang out over her own blunders. Here was something in which they could start even.

The days were now divided in regular order. The morning began with the little service, in the pagoda when it shone, in the large parlor or living-room when it rained. Following this, until lunch-time Frances and her pupil studied and recited in the common English branches. At first this session of tutoring was fraught with such embarrassment on the side of the pupil that frequently hot tears blinded his sight; but the girl met the difficulty with such sweet frankness, blending honest with consolation in such wise measure, that sh disarmed the young fellow and abated his sel consciousness. His eagerness and her patien

combined to bring good results, at first slowly, but as time went on, with increasing certainty.

After luncheon, away for the golf links, and a merry season of another sort of teaching, where Frances and her pupil were fellow learners.

Billy's strength had to become tamed gradually to skill, but there was gratification to him at first, which he did not voice, when his ball flew like a bird far beyond Frances's ineffectual drives.

"How well you do, Billy!" she said with genuine admiration, the second day of their efforts.

The young man did not respond.

"Does n't he?" she turned to Burling, who stood by; but she appreciated the tact with which Maurice refrained from open praise, which just now would grate upon his nephew's sensitiveness.

"He gets good direction," he said quietly; "but don't count on it, Billy. That 's golf. It is a will-o'-the-wisp: now you get it and now you don't."

Following the hours spent on the links, the heir of Ardleigh returned to his studies, and remained until bedtime buried in the books from which he was to recite in the morning.

Miss Hereford meantime kept watch at a little distance and talked with Frances every day. Dudley, the sharp-eared, sharp-eyed, and sharp-tongued, saw all that was going on, and was frequently the recipient of her mistress's expressions of thanksgiving.

"I waken every day to find the great cloud lifted, Dudley," she said one morning when the maid came in to make her toilet. "I never thought

to have such kindly feelings toward America and everything and everybody in it; and it 's all owing to this wonderful young girl."

"I can't see, Miss Hereford, that she has done anything so wonderful," responded the maid, with the frankness of a privileged confidante. "The doctors all said it would be the saving of Mr. William to have his mind waked up by an interest in young people his own age, and he happened to fancy Miss Rogers."

"Ah, but what a happening it was for us that it should be such a lovely character to whom he took a fancy! Mr. William's mind was like that of a child, and to have all these new impressions now being made upon it, pure and good — what a gift of God it is, Dudley!"

The woman sniffed. "Miss Rogers has you all under her thumb, Miss Hereford, — you and Mr. Burling as well as Mr. William, and even that poor creature Sanders. There are some people too good for me. I tell you, she knows which side her bread is buttered on."

"Dudley!" Miss Hereford's gentle eyes flashed. "You don't know what you are saying," she added, kindly but firmly, "but never another word of that sort in my hearing."

The maid dashed away the tears that suddenly smarted in her eyes. "Then I suppose you won't mind entertaining Miss Graves at Ardleigh."

Miss Hereford stared.

"What interest have I except for you?" went on Dudley, seeing her advantage and pursuing it.

"Your love for Mr. William makes you blind to everything else. If I might be so bold, Miss Hereford, why don't you have Mr. William to take his meals now with you and Mr. Burling?"

"I did suggest that to Mr. Burling yesterday; but he thought it wisest not to disturb the present conditions for a while yet. Mr. William takes an early start now in the morning — earlier than we do — so as to get at his studies. Think of it, Dudley! Look back to the days when our poor child was ill; look over the weary years between; and then see how small are the thoughts you are holding in your mind in view of this wonderful blessing that has started on its way to us."

"That 's true, my lady," said Dudley meaningly. "Things have only started. There 's more coming to you than you 've counted on; and I only wish for your sake that Miss Rogers was really a princess instead of a Yankee school-teacher with loud-talking Yankee relations."

After this burst Dudley's lips snapped together. Miss Hereford did not reply, and the toilet proceeded in silence; but the maid hoped the words she had dropped would not be forgotten.

After their last unlucky visit, the Jewetts had not called at Waterview; but many notes were exchanged between Frances and Mrs. Jewett, whose helpful thought was always going out to her young friend.

Laura had reflected daily upon the scene in the pagoda. Frances Rogers had become an object of decided interest to her since the hour when she

had seen the enchanted prince weeping, with his head in the lap of his princess. She still felt a private sense of surprise that she herself was but a cipher in his estimation, but the bulletins of his condition as they reached her through her mother always roused her interest.

Laura always afterward looked back upon this time as the season when she began to regard doubtfully those standards to which during all her girlhood she had bowed down. She began to get an inkling that life held more important things than an intimate knowledge of the "latest wrinkle" in every line of fashionable interest. She suddenly came to the realization that she was no longer thinking of the housekeeper's niece at Waterview as an inferior, but was, in spite of herself, looking up to her.

Her own fond mother, she knew, was patiently tolerating her weaknesses and vanities and waiting for the happy day when a larger outlook would sweep away her present small hopes and fears. "I could never have done what Frances Rogers has!" she thought, with a sudden revulsion of humility. "I went to the pagoda that first time full of conceit and vanity, just thinking of my own effect on Mr. Burling and his nephew. If the prince had fancied me, I should never have done him any good. I could n't have been the right princess, anyway." Her cheeks burned.

It was a very salutary dose that she was swallowing, and having beneath all her airy affectations a very honest nature, she did not blink the

truth now that she saw it. "I 've been just a silly little snob!" she thought. "Mother knows it. I dare say she 's been telling me so for weeks, in some underhanded way."

The neighboring houses filled with their summer residents, and Laura found her girl friends about her again; but no word escaped the Jewetts of the story of the enchanted prince.

Finally one of Frances's notes stated that Mr. Burling had returned from New York. Morning after morning Laura expected to meet him at the golf links, but he did not appear.

"Do you suppose Englishmen go into seclusion when they lose a brother-in-law?" she asked her mother one evening, when she came in bringing the mail.

"I don't know. Here is a note from Frances now. Let us see what she says."

"'All is going well with us. Mr. Burling and Miss Hereford are much stirred by the improvement in their nephew. Mr. Burling is elated that he has at last persuaded Mr. Hereford to learn golf, for he considers it will be such a helpful diversion for mind as well as body. One of the claims in the case has been inertia, and it was impossible for them to interest their nephew to drive, or walk, or fish, or enter into any kind of sport. Mr. Burling brought from New York a complete golf outfit for me as well as for Mr. Hereford, and we have been going over to the links every afternoon'" —

"That is the reason, then!" interrupted Laura. "He always used to go in the morning."

"'I 'm not very quick at learning the game, but am fascinated with trying, and Mr. Hereford takes to it wonderfully. I can see what a satisfaction it gives him to excel me. Ah, we are fast gaining the realization for him that there is nothing abnormal. By autumn he will be ready for a tutor. I am now trying in thought to prepare him to allow me to leave him.'"

"Well," commented Laura, "your class baby is coming in for everything."

"And you are glad, of course," suggested Mrs. Jewett. "Did n't you say that no money would tempt you to fill her place?"

"Yes, I did; and I am glad." The girl spoke thoughtfully. "I suppose it is only to be expected that those two people should set her up in a niche now and worship her; but I do think" — Laura left the sentence unfinished, and determined to continue to ignore the golf links in the afternoon.

A few days afterward Mr. Burling called, and mother and daughter were filled with sympathy, as they observed the relief and hopefulness of his words and manner.

"What a short time ago it seems, Miss Jewett," he said, "since that morning when you said to me that you were not the right princess! Our horizon never was so dark as then."

"So the adage was proved, was n't it?" responded Laura. "Yes, indeed; I was so far from being the right princess, I seemed to be the farthest wrong that could be found. I wonder if every time I meet your nephew I am to drive him to extremes?"

"I scarce dare to make a suggestion," answered Burling, with a smile, "but I have looked for you on the links for several afternoons. My nephew studies through the morning, so I attend to whatever business I have to do then, and give my afternoons to teaching the young idea how to drive. Miss Rogers threatens to outdo us all in enthusiasm."

"How long does she remain at Waterview?" asked Laura.

Burling's countenance sobered. "That is one of the questions which we don't face as yet. She has brought the sunshine into our lives. As yet we scarcely dare hope or can realize that her going will not mean a return to old conditions. I am sure she will not leave us until my nephew has become wonted to this new phase of his life. I speak confidentially with you both, because you know what the situation has been, and you are Miss Rogers's friends. You have seen how he has clung to her, demanded her time, would like to tyrannize over her. All that is past. Now he rather seeks seclusion, and she is dealing with the present phase. It is not one in which she could leave him, and none of us could perceive that so clearly as she herself. It has become her problem as well as ours. She will not leave us."

Burling smiled as he finished, and his expression startled Laura.

"I 'm sure she will not," she answered thoughtfully.

"You will have a testimonial to give for Christian

Science when you get back to England, Mr. Burling," said Mrs. Jewett.

"I hope so," he replied gravely. "I shall if my nephew goes on as he has begun, after he is separated from Miss Rogers."

Laura Jewett shrugged her shoulders. "Of course your doctors and friends will say it was just the start that any congenial comrade would have given him if his interest could have been roused."

"Do you yourself believe that is all that has been done, Mr. Burling?" asked Mrs. Jewett.

He smiled into her questioning eyes before he replied.

"No, I am convinced that it is not," he answered slowly.

"Good."

"Of course we can't go over to the links without meeting people," went on Maurice after a pause, "and I notice that my nephew attracts considerable attention."

"He would anywhere," suggested Mrs. Jewett.

"True; and that is why it may be as I hope, — that his story is not generally known."

"I hope you don't suspect us," remarked Laura.

"Certainly not," responded Burling.

"You might," said the girl. "I should have been apt to relate the tale to some intimate, only that mother warned me. You see, I had not such faith as she in the outcome, and did not suppose that Mr. Hereford would leave his retirement. As it is, I scarcely think any one knows his story — excepting one phase of it." Laura smiled archly.

"It is very generally known that your nephew has a title. You must realize that all good Americans would stare even if he were an insignificant pygmy: how much more, then, under the circumstances!"

"Ah!" Burling raised his eyebrows. "I had n't thought of that feature of the situation."

"Yes, indeed. In fact, a friend who came to see me yesterday was full of interest in your party. She had seen and heard you at the links. She assured me with much excitement that there was a lovely blonde princess visiting you, and supposed that was why you so evidently desired to remain by yourselves."

Burling laughed. "What did you tell her?"

"I told her it was a nickname that had been given the young lady, and that you were all really very human."

"Be careful. We must n't be considered too human. I don't want my nephew frightened away from the course. Won't you come to-morrow afternoon if it is fine and help me protect him? We will each take one of the novices and have a foursome."

Laura consented demurely; but when the visitor had departed she turned to her mother in comical dismay.

"Fancy me as the partner of Ursa Major! You 'll have to come and caddy, mother. Some of my innocent small talk will be sure to make him set on me with a mid-iron, and I shall need you to cry for help."

CHAPTER XXII

GOLF

THE following day, the weather being glorious, Laura Jewett and her mother took their way to the golf links at the appointed hour. They found their friends waiting for them near the first teeing-ground.

Frances and Mr. Hereford were receiving a lesson in form from Mr. Burling, using daisies for balls, and Laura looked with much covert curiosity at the stalwart figure of Sir William and the face that he turned toward them upon hearing his uncle's greeting.

"He did n't expect us. He is sorry," thought the girl quickly; but the young fellow advanced hatless and shook hands with the two ladies. His associations with Miss Jewett were of the most disagreeable. She had worried and annoyed him when he was in the dark, and afterward had prophesied evil which was unfounded; but he was rapidly learning that other things beside *noblesse oblige*, and he faced her now with pensive attention as she spoke to him.

"Is n't it a great game?" she asked brightly.

"Yes. I am only learning it; but I don't break so many clubs as I did. Maurice says I shall play after a while."

Laura was confident that the eyes looking through her scarcely saw her at all.

"I think golf is the best sport there is — except dancing," she went on. "Of course, dancing takes the lead."

She laughed rather nervously. She knew she was saying the wrong thing, and there seemed nothing else to say.

"Dancing?" repeated her companion gravely, at last looking at her. "Is it difficult to learn?"

"No, indeed. Easy. I could teach you myself."

The serious dark eyes seemed weighing this. "Thank you. Princess," said the young fellow, suddenly turning toward Frances.

"Yes?" The girl looked up from her chat with Mrs. Jewett.

"Do you dance, Princess?"

"Alas! no."

"Do you intend to learn?"

"No."

The young fellow turned back to Laura. "I don't need to learn to dance," he announced simply, with an air of relief.

Miss Jewett repressed a smile. "Silly little cipher — zero — goose-egg Laura Jewett!" she said to herself. "Will you never learn your place? This is growing romantic. I wonder if Frances Rogers realizes it? What am I?" with a sudden rush of humility, "what am I, anyway, compared to her? I 'm going to write a new primer: 'The lion is strong. Frances Rogers is strong.'"

"Are n't you going to play, Mrs. Jewett?" asked Burling. "You don't seem armed."

"No. I 've left my clubs in the locker. I 'm going to look on this afternoon. The weather is so fine, I 'm satisfied simply to be out of doors."

"Well, then, we 'll show you a thing or two. We 'll have a great foursome."

"And I will play with the princess," announced Sir William, moving toward Frances's blue Tam-o'-Shanter.

"Not at all, not at all," returned Burling. "What would you two beginners do against such seasoned warriors as Miss Jewett and myself?"

Frances smiled into Billy's grave eyes. "We 're nothing but babes in the woods, you know," she said. "We should get lost at the first bunker, and the robins would come and cover us with leaves."

Sir William looked as if he would rather like that programme, but his uncle spoke decidedly.

"You and Miss Jewett will play together, Billy, and the princess and I. Watch Miss Jewett's form now, Miss Rogers. You could n't do better than to imitate her."

Laura shrugged her shoulders. "You expect me to hit the ball after that, do you?" she asked, as Burling stooped and carefully made a tee.

"It would be impossible to rattle Miss Jewett," he replied.

"What an awful moment!" she remarked airily, taking her place and addressing the ball.

"I think you 're too near me, partner," she added, looking around at the young man, who was

watching her movements absently. "I should be sorry to disable you, for we have to beat these people, and I 'm counting on your strong right arm."

He stepped back, and she made her drive with a coolness and skill that roused the admiration of her audience.

"Ah, if girls can drive like that!" exclaimed Frances, her eyes shining. "Was n't that splendid, Billy?"

His face had grown interested as he watched the ball's true, swift flight. "Immense. I should n't suppose you could do that, Miss Jewett."

"Oh, it is n't muscle that counts in golf," she returned lightly.

"Or anywhere else, I find," he answered soberly.

They got on very well together. Laura took much pains with her partner-pupil, and he being eager to learn, by the time they sat down to rest, flushed with the pride of winning the game, there existed quite friendly relations between them. Mrs. Jewett had sauntered around the course with her daughter, and now Sir William invited her to be seated at a little table with them, to drink Apollinaris lemonade.

Frances and Mr. Burling were at another table farther down the piazza, and Laura exulted that in the glow of pleasant excitement evident in her partner's face he did not appear to be restless under the arrangement. A number of her acquaintances and friends passed and repassed, and it was with a mischievous satisfaction that she noted their covert interest.

"The next time you must play, Mrs. Jewett," he suggested. "Do you play as well as your daughter?"

"Ask *me* that, Mr. Hereford," said Laura. "I do wish I could call you Sir William! It's so grand for us Americans, — who don't have Sir Anybodys, you know; but Mr. Burling says I must n't."

"No," assented the young man, with the simple and rather sad dignity into which he instantly fell upon remembering himself. "Maurice says it makes people stare, so it is best not. That 's odd, too. I don't understand it. But you were going to speak of your mother, Miss Jewett."

"Yes. I was going to say she is a famous golfer."

"Then you shall play with your daughter next time." He looked at Mrs. Jewett, who smiled in return.

"I learned the game in your beautiful country," she remarked. "I learned to play in England."

"Do you think England is beautiful?" asked the young man. "I never noticed. It is beautiful here."

"When you go back it will look to you as never before. You will be filled with joy in the whole land, and your own home, of course, is very lovely."

"Ardleigh?" without enthusiasm. "Oh, yes, I believe Ardleigh is a fine old place." He paused, then added, "I am studying now, getting ready to go back. I have lost so much time!"

"Talk about people with a past!" thought

Laura embarrassedly, stirring her lemonade with the straws. "They 're not to be compared for discomfort to people without a past. How is one to talk to a man who was born yesterday without reminding him of the fact every minute?"

She was relieved by the direct and calm manner in which her mother replied, —

"We know in Science that nothing can ever be lost. It is never too late for people who know they are living in eternity."

"Yes, the princess told me that you understood," said the young man simply. "Miss Jewett does n't understand, does she?" He turned his dark eyes upon Laura, who grew warm with surprise.

"Not yet; but she will some day," returned Mrs. Jewett.

"No," still regarding Laura. "It is n't in her eyes. It is in the princess's eyes, and in yours. Perhaps it will be in mine some day when I have climbed farther up the rugged way."

"Certainly; especially if you remember to rejoice."

"That is the hardest part now," said the young man frankly. "I used to think the princess liked to be with me as much as I do with her; but now I understand that it is only her kindness. She knows so much that she would rather talk with Maurice, of course. He knows a lot, does Maurice."

"That won't last long," said Mrs. Jewett. "You can learn all she knows of books, and when that is

accomplished she will care more for your trust in divine Love than for all the learning."

"But she can't enjoy stupid, ignorant people."

"Of course not; and there can't be any in Science."

The young fellow looked at the speaker eagerly. "There can't be any in Science, can there?" he repeated.

"No, indeed. God is Intelligence as well as Love, and you have nothing to fear."

Billy caught his breath. "But it hurts me to bore the princess!" he said.

"Patience," returned Mrs. Jewett, smiling at him. "Patience. You are on the right track. Can one ask or wish for more than that?"

He drank in her words with touching absorption.

"We would be very glad to have you come to see us, Mr. Hereford," said Mrs. Jewett, when later they were parting. "I know you are very busy, but if you find yourself in our neighborhood, drop in."

"I will," he responded quickly. "If you will let me, I will come."

"Well, mother!" exclaimed Laura, as they were driving home. "Such a wonderful thing as the change in that man I have never in my life seen! If that is Christian Science, then I am wasting time."

"Oh, Laura!" Tears sprang to Mrs. Jewett's eyes. "If our class baby has brought that about, as well as this wonderful help to Mr. Hereford, what do I not owe her!"

"He is transformed, that is certain. Of course, people might say he is under the spell of the first attractive girl who could ever come near him; but I know it is more than that. Is n't his simplicity touching? Why, he has n't his eyes wide enough open yet to know that he is in love with his princess."

"And he is n't. He won't be," said Mrs. Jewett quickly. "Frances will take care of that."

"Don't be so sure. How about Frances herself? I can't imagine any more attractive situation than waking up the spiritual part of that handsome young boor — as he was when I first saw him."

"The affection of a mother for her child," said Mrs. Jewett. "Something like that Frances must of course feel for him."

Laura laughed. "She did n't look the part this afternoon. She is a girl, mother, and he is 'a lord of high degree' — or low degree, I don't know which — and he worships her."

"Science attends to all that," replied Mrs. Jewett quietly. "Every working Scientist ought to handle the claim of mortal mind attraction between man and woman every day of his or her life."

"How about love? I notice they marry."

"Love is a different thing. When true love comes, it glorifies the day's work."

"Well, how do you know it has n't come in this case?" persisted the girl.

"That is none of my business," said Mrs. Jewett, smiling, "and there is so much that is! We don't

want to hurt or confuse our friends by our thoughts."

"Oh, if you 're going to be a Sphinx!" returned Laura, but she reached over and squeezed her mother's hand. "I 'm going to study it, mother," she said. "I 've been very slow, but I 've come to it. I 've done a lot of thinking the last month. I 've outgrown the attitude of those astute outsiders who think they make such an astonishing concession when they announce that they do 'believe there is something in it.' I begin to *know* that there 's something in it a good deal bigger than I am."

Sanders, with an unwonted amount of time on his hands, had become jaunty in the same ratio that his master had grown humble.

"I 'm a valet instead of a nurse now, that 's what I ham," he announced to Miss Graves this afternoon while the golf players were away. He had found her sewing on her porch. "There 's something doing in our family, Miss Graves, and it 's hall along of your niece, bless 'er good 'eart."

"I don't worry as I did about her, Sanders, I must say. She 's done what Miss Hereford asked of her, and the young man shows the effect of her help. I don't believe he 'd hurt a fly; and he seems kind of sad to me, though my niece won't admit it."

"Yes; but I 'm looking for 'im to get hover that. From being the laziest young gentleman one could find, the days don't seem long enough; and hinstead of sleeping when 'e 'as a bit of time

or the rain won't let them play golf, 'e goes hoff for long tramps through the country. At first I was for going with 'im; but 'e said I might stop at 'ome. So I went to Mr. Burling and told 'im, and 'e looked sort of startled and then went to hask the princess; but she just laughed. 'Let 'im go,' she said, 'w'enever and w'erever 'e likes.' What surprised me as much as hanything was that Mr. William was willing to go without the princess."

"It 's a mercy," rejoined the housekeeper curtly. "My niece has an hour to herself now and then in these days."

"And so do I, Miss Graves; and it 's hall along of the princess and 'er religion. She will 'ave it that nobody 's done hanything but God halmighty, and she must know what she 's talking about — and the fact his, Miss Graves, I stopped to hask if you 'd kindly get me the princess's book — 'er 'ymnal. She said, the young lady did, that I might read in it w'enever I 'ad time. I was hever fond of poetry; and that 'as the truest in it that hever I 'eard."

Miss Graves looked in astonishment at the man a minute before she rose, then going into the house, returned with the hymnal.

He turned over its leaves and pointed to the second verse of their favorite hymn, "Shepherd, show me how to go."

"Read there, Miss Graves."

She took the book and followed as Sanders read, —

"Thou wilt bind the stubborn will,

(That 's Mr. William.)

Wound the callous breast,

(That was 'is — 'e was 'arder than nails.)

Bid self-righteousness be still,

(That was me. I thought I was a peach till 'er 'ighness came.)

Break hearth's stupid rest.

(That was hall of us, Miss Graves.) "

Sanders paused, and his companion read to the end of the verse, —

"Pilgrims on a barren shore,
Lab'ring long and lone,
We would enter by the door,
And Thou know'st Thine own."

"The princess, she 's one of 'is hown," said Sanders. "Miss 'Ereford, she hentertained an hangel hunawares. I guess I know if hanybody does. I 'ad sour looks and 'ot tea thrown at me. I 'ad kicks and cuffs and hevery few days a grouch; and I was a havaricious 'ypocrite, pretending to love Mr. William when I 'ated 'im; and now look at us. This is your niece's doings, and I 'm going to be the same kind of a Christian she is. She says I can. I suppose you are one halready?"

Miss Graves cleared her throat. "I was brought up a Christian, yes, Sanders," she answered, sewing busily.

The man was turning over the leaves of the hymnal. "'Ere 's another," he said. "I 'll lay the princess says this verse hevery morning of 'er sweet life."

He indicated the lines to Miss Graves, who read silently, —

> "My prayer, some daily good to do
> To Thine, for Thee, —
> An offering pure of Love, whereto
> God leadeth me."

He went off at last, bearing the hymnal triumphantly under his arm.

Miss Graves looked after him through her glasses as he receded. Then she rose restlessly and moved to the edge of the porch. Standing there on the step, she worked a few minutes untwisting some matted tendrils of the vine. But her thoughts were not upon what she was doing. At last she ceased, and her absent eyes took note of a stone lying near by. She turned it over with the toe of her shoe.

"What have *you* got to say about Frances?" she inquired. "Nothing? Well, it 's a wonder."

CHAPTER XXIII

MORE LIGHT

THE weeks went by, and the programme of the days was practically unchanged, except in one particular; and this was the attitude of the young Sir William Hereford toward his princess.

The suspicions which Dudley had endeavored to instill into her mistress's mind seemed less and less founded. Maurice Burling continued to attend the little morning service, after which his nephew was left alone for an hour for the treatment and talk which Frances gave him daily, and under the influence of which a quiet good cheer and courage gradually came to him. Following this came recitations and study; but unless the party went to the golf links after lunch, that was the last Frances saw of her pupil until the following day; and when golf was indulged in, as soon as the game was over Billy always, as a matter of course, left Miss Rogers to Burling's escort.

The social life of the resort was now in full swing, but as the family at Waterview were known to be in mourning, it was easy for them to escape its demands.

Frances soon discovered that many of the tramps which Sir William took in the afternoons included

an informal visit at Windermere. Sometimes she drove about the country with Maurice Burling, whose watchfulness for her comfort was vigilant. Sometimes she sat for an hour with Miss Hereford, whose love and gratitude toward her grew with the days. The girl's attitude toward life, coupled with the extraordinary transformation she had worked, overcame little by little the English lady's prejudices, until one day Frances met her aunt at their evening dinner with beaming eyes.

"Miss Hereford has asked me to read to her every day from 'Science and Health,'" she announced. "Mr. Burling sent to New York for two copies, one for himself and one for her, and they came to-day. She has asked to come to the lesson to-morrow morning, too."

"H'm. Your cause seems to be booming," remarked Miss Graves. "At the same time, I don't just see how they could hold off, with that boy of theirs clothed and in his right mind."

"Yet you hold off," said Frances.

"He is n't my nephew!" returned Miss Graves, with a sharp look at her niece.

"It will be such a blessed thing for him, to have them understand a little of Christian Science before they leave America," said the girl musingly.

"I judge he is n't going to rare around and pull down houses and raise Ned when you go 'way from him now," remarked the housekeeper.

"No, indeed. He has a different and a safe reliance."

Miss Graves gave an inarticulate ejaculation. "Dudley says he finds it over at Windermere," she ventured.

Frances looked up inquiringly. "Yes," she returned. "He finds sympathy there. I told you — did n't I? — that Laura Jewett has at last made her mother happy by studying Science seriously."

"I ain't a bit surprised," remarked Miss Graves dryly. "She looks smart."

"What do you mean?"

"Why, Sir William Hereford is n't going to end up in an asylum, after all. Do you suppose she is going to give up the chance of heart to heart talks with him? Not if that little girl knows herself."

"Aunt Mira, don't!" The slender eyebrows drew together. "How wrong your sense is!"

"It 's real good horse sense, Frances. I 've lived in this world a while longer than you have. Now, don't look so cut up. It kind of riles me to have that young man take everything he can get from you, then as soon as he 's fit to talk to, go off and spend his time with other folks."

Frances hesitated a moment, and Miss Graves glanced sharply at her deeply flushed cheeks.

"I 'm quite certain you would not like it if he did otherwise," returned Frances.

"No, I should be scared to death," admitted Miss Graves promptly. "He was around here a few minutes yesterday afternoon, as civil and well spoken as anybody, while you were off driving

with Mr. Burling. I 'm some scared about him." Another sharp look at Frances's downcast eyes.

"Indeed? Scared about Mr. Burling?"

"Yes. You 're only a girl, and as green as any other girl about the ways of earth, for all you know so much about heaven. I 'm just counting the weeks, Frances Rogers, before I can get you back to Melrose. There 's an ocean now between you and these folks, only you can't see it. In the fall you can."

"Yes; in the fall I can," returned Frances slowly. "Miss Hereford and I had a business talk this afternoon, Aunt Mira. She told me what she intends paying me for my work here this summer. It is a great deal. It is very hard for me to take it."

The girl spoke in detached phrases, as if the words came with difficulty.

"You 've earned every cent of it, I don't care what it is," declared Miss Graves emphatically.

"Miss Hereford was very, very kind. She met my objections with decided arguments. She had thought it all out, and had it down on paper what the tutoring was worth and what she would have had to pay a physician for the same amount of attention. It will help us, Aunt Mira — but it is very hard for me. I have been treated like a guest. They have done so much for me!"

Miss Graves saw the furtive touch of the girl's handkerchief to the corner of one of the downcast eyes, and her heart yearned within her at the display of weakness in such a quarter.

"But it 's good for you, Frances, dear child," she said kindly. "It has been a matter of business from the first, and this action of Miss Hereford's places it right in that light and holds it there. Mr. Hereford is making it evident that he sees it so, and Mr. Burling is only your grateful host, who wants to give you what diversion he can."

"Of course I understand that!" returned the girl.

She and her aunt always had their evenings undisturbed, and Miss Graves appreciated her charming companion. Frances talked with her or read to her, sometimes on the subject nearest her heart, and sometimes from one of the latest novels or magazines, with which the house abounded. Miss Graves no longer contended with her niece about her faith, and Frances herself had no means of knowing how much her aunt's mental attitude might have changed toward it until the very evening following this talk.

"I 've got one of my headaches coming on, Frances," said Miss Graves, resignedly.

"Oh, I 'm sorry. Can't you give me the orders to-night, so I shall be able to do your work in the morning?"

"Yes, I could, but I 'd rather do my work myself. Do you want to treat me, Frances?"

"Indeed, I do!"

The housekeeper was already pale, and her hand pressed her forehead.

"Well, if you 'll fix me so 's I can get up to-

morrow morning and go on as if nothing had happened, I 'll read your book, and I 'll know, if I can't make head nor tail of it, the fault 's in me and not in Mrs. Eddy. I don't believe you can, though, child. I 'm a hard nut."

"I know I can't," returned the girl.

"What do you want to try for, then?" asked Miss Graves, disconcerted.

"Because God can and will, Aunt Mira. Just go to bed now, and be trustful."

As soon as her aunt had lain down and was safely tucked in, Frances seated herself beside the bed and covered her eyes with her hand.

"I feel foolish enough to laugh," thought Miss Miranda, looking up covertly at the shadowy figure, "but I guess I 'll say my prayers. I 've asked my Father to cure my headaches every night since Frances Rogers came; and if He does do it for the child's asking, I 'll know there 's something wrong with my petitions."

Miss Graves was of the temperament which sleeps with one eye open. On this occasion the first thing she knew after she closed her eyes upon Frances's still figure and began to say her prayers, was that daylight was shining in at her window.

"What does this mean?" she thought in bewilderment, sitting up in bed. She looked at her watch. It was half past six. She looked around at her niece. Frances was still sleeping.

"I have n't done that for twenty years," was her astonished thought, "and what 's a good deal more, my head 's clear."

For a few minutes she sat quietly thinking; then she reached out to the stand near her bed and took her Bible.

Opening it at random, her eyes fell upon these lines: "Arise, shine, for thy light has come."

Awe stole over her heart. She let the leaves of the Bible close and looked long at the sunny strip gilding the edges of her window curtain.

Frances turned and sighed and opened her eyes. "Oh, good-morning, Aunt Mira."

"That 's as true a word as you ever said, child."

"What?"

"It 's the best morning I 've known for many a long day. I 'm going to try to learn how and why. I 'm going to study your books, Frances; and I want to ask your pardon for the things I said when you first came here."

Frances sat up in bed too, and threw her arms around the other's neck. "You will learn so much, Aunt Mira! You will learn what a small part of it all is the physical healing. We shall be so happy!"

Weeks passed away, and the season was drawing to a close for the young teacher whose duties at home awaited her. She had so long been the pivot upon which the household turned that it was tacitly accepted that when she must leave they would all go. In those last weeks even Dudley softened toward the housekeeper's niece. Her jealousy for the family she adored had been soothed by the fact that Mr. William no longer sought the girl in his leisure moments, and that the

dreaded time had never come when all barriers between the housekeeper's quarters and the family rooms would be broken down. Miss Hereford loved Miss Rogers, to be sure, but the family certainly owed her a great deal for Mr. William's improvement, and if they *were* all taken up with this new-fangled religion of hers, that mattered little. There were only a few weeks left, and then away for old England, and no more America or Americans forever!

It was early in August that Maurice Burling sent for Sanders one evening to come to him in his study. As the servant entered the room Burling noted the change in the man's countenance which the summer had made.

"Well, Sanders," he said, turning around in his chair and facing the other with a smile, "you don't look so down in the mouth as you did three months ago."

"Thank you, sir. I 've hevery reason for looking better. If I may say so, Mr. Burling," looking at the debonair countenance before him, "you 'ave thrown off five to ten years yourself since we came to Waterview."

"Yes? Well, that 's the way I feel, Sanders. Now I 'm thinking about home. I dare say you are."

"Yes, sir."

"Have you talked at all with Mr. William about a return to Ardleigh?"

"No, Mr. Burling. I 've 'ad no horders, sir, hand 'e 'as n't spoke of it."

"That is well." Maurice nodded. "I know it is in his mind. We have referred to it several times. It is time now to engage our passage. I will speak to him. It has been an interesting thing to observe his growing independence of Miss Rogers. Once we could not have made the proposition to leave her."

Burling's fine features glowed with deep content.

"Yes, Mr. Burling, 'e 'as a pride now; but hin my hopinion it does n't mean an hindependence of the princess."

"You think he will rebel at going back to England? Oh, no, Sanders. You may not have known, but Mr. William has been growing more generally friendly of late. He attends to business here, but for pleasure he goes to the ladies at Windermere." The speaker's eyes laughed pleasantly into the fixed ones of the servant.

"Your pardon, Mr. Burling, but I do know 'ow hoften Mr. William goes to Windermere."

"And Miss Jewett always joins us at golf now. Mr. William, contrary to his old aversion, urges her doing so."

"I dare say, Mr. Burling. Aow*hever*, all that does n't haffect my belief that Mr. William, w'erehever 'e is and w'athever 'e 's doing, is thinking habout the princess."

Burling laughed. "Ah, you 're romantic, Sanders. You wish it to be so."

"Well, Mr. Burling, once I would 'ave felt it better for Mr. William not to get well than to make such a match; but now I think that the

greatest blessing that could come to Hardleigh would be hour Hamerican princess; and if she were really the niece of hour queen, I say she could n't be a rarer lady than w'at she his!"

"Hear, hear!" said Burling. "Your sentiments do you credit, Sanders, but your judgment about your master has run wild."

"You think so, Mr. Burling; but it 's little things I go by; and trust me to know w'at 's mostly in Mr. William's mind."

Burling laughed and rose. "What is he doing now? Studying, I suppose. I 'll go to him for a few minutes. I intend to engage our passage for an early date in September, so you can begin singing 'Home, Sweet Home,' Sanders."

Maurice found his nephew at a desk, surrounded by books, the lights blazing above his head, undauntedly working in the warmth of the summer evening.

"Is there any admittance except on business, Billy?" he asked, pausing at the threshold of the door.

The young man turned and stretched his arms as he yawned.

"Yes, come in," he said. "I 'm about through. The princess gave me such a compliment this morning on my improvement that I 've been working double time to-day."

"What? Neglected Windermere?" asked Burling. "I thought when you left us after golf that you probably went over there to see why Miss Jewett did n't come to play."

"No; I walked awhile and then came home to dig."

Burling seated himself. "I came in to-night because it suddenly occurred to me that Aunt Eleanor is very particular about her stateroom, and I would better be writing to the steamship company."

Sir William ceased yawning and looked at his uncle.

"Oh. Are you setting a time for going?"

"Well, I thought I would consult with you about it. The princess's school opens in September, and I thought it might be less doleful for us to leave her here than to let her leave us here, eh? Better be at Ardleigh without her than here without her, eh?" Burling's eyes shone cheerfully.

"Yes. It has to be gone through with," replied Sir William slowly. "We must separate for a while. She says I ought to spend this next winter with a tutor. Of course I must. I see that myself; then next summer" — a change like the sun breaking out upon a cloudy landscape irradiated his face — "I shall be more worthy of her."

A cold fear clutched Maurice Burling's heart. "You set some definite time, then, for seeing the princess again?" he asked when he could speak.

His nephew smiled into the steady gray eyes. "There would naturally be a definite time," he said, "or I could n't leave her; and that time would naturally be the very first possible minute."

Burling kept silence. The surprise was too sudden and overwhelming to admit of speech.

"This impression may weaken before another summer," he said at last. "You are going to meet a lot of girls at home, Billy."

The young fellow smiled with infinite contempt, and said nothing.

"And you are going to learn many things about your position of which now you don't dream. You have not sought Miss Rogers outside your working hours. I thought you did not care."

"I was not fit. I had not learned enough; but the man I will become for her sake, and with Divine Love to help me, will be fit."

The boy looked very young and very handsome as he made this declaration. His uncle regarded him gravely. "I am your guardian, Billy, and I ask you to remember that you are going home to be the head of a splendid estate. You will be drawn into a circle whose lives and habits will all be new to you. You have a house in London, and you will entertain women — brilliant, beautiful women — who would scarcely think they could converse with an American schoolteacher. Let me advise you not to commit yourself to this young girl, whom we respect and — and — reverence to such an extent that the idea of disappointing or misleading her would be the most painful thing in the world."

"Mislead her! Disappoint her!" Sir William smiled upon his companion pityingly. "Why, Maurice," he added simply, after a pause to choose

his words, "you don't seem to understand. She is my life."

Burling's teeth set together for an instant. "And what do you think you are to her, Billy? Have you asked her that?"

"No, not yet. I shall wait till the very last, for then she will know that I have done my best. She is so far above me as yet — my princess! The English ladies not speak to her! Ah, I shall be always looking for those who may be fit for her to speak to. She says that some people over there understand. And it won't seem so very long, for I shall work so hard!"

Suddenly the boy stretched out his hand to his companion. "You've been awfully good to me, Maurice. I've given you a lot of trouble!" he said, with a rare burst of affection.

His uncle lifted a pale face to him. "That's all right, old man. We must begin now talking over home affairs. I wish you would plan to give me an hour a day until we go. There are a good many things that I would like to explain to you before you get there."

"Aunt Eleanor says the greenhouses are very fine," said Sir William, smiling absently. "She loves flowers so much. I'm glad she can have them all winter — all she wants."

"Yes. Aunt Eleanor has missed a good many things."

"Oh — Aunt Eleanor — yes; but — I was thinking of the princess."

Burling rose abruptly. "Well, I'll say good-

night, Billy, and to-morrow I 'll write to the steamship company."

Had Sanders met him as he slowly left the room, the man would scarcely have repeated his declaration that the years had slipped from him.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE LAST DAY

THE next day was rainy. As Miss Graves and Frances rose from lunch, Maurice Burling appeared on their porch and knocked beside the open door.

Frances answered the summons and joined him on the piazza.

"Here is the book of poems I spoke of, Miss Rogers. This rainy afternoon I thought you would have time for it."

The girl's face fell slightly, but she quickly recovered herself. When Burling had described the book to her on the occasion of their last drive, he had suggested that they read it aloud together.

"Yes, I shall have time," she answered. "Thank you. I was just mourning the rain, like a naughty child. I find I am really a golfiac."

Burling nodded and looked off on the drenched grass.

"'Into each life some rain must fall,'" he said, "but it does seem an especial pity that the golfer can't escape."

"It would n't be wet at all under these vines," thought Frances. "Why does n't he suggest reading here?"

"How the robins sing!" she said aloud. "I

visited in the country once where they called it 'hollering'! I like to hear them 'holler' in their shower bath, don't you?"

"Yes. Our robins are brave too. Wait till you see the bright-eyed little fellows warbling away in the snow."

"Ah!" a light sigh. "I never expect to see England."

Burling, whose eyes had been fixed on the lofty branch from which the song was pouring, brought his gaze slowly around to her.

"Indeed?" he said, with gentle inquiry. "You never expect to see England?"

Frances wished she could repress the flush she felt stealing up over cheek and brow. "Schoolma'ams do go to Europe sometimes," she replied, with a lift of the eyebrows. "I ought to live in hope."

"By all means, live in hope," replied Burling, with the ghost of his old quizzical manner. "I have an idea that that will be a demonstration easy for you to make. There will be one latchstring always out for you."

"Oh, thank you."

"Don't thank me; not mine — I have n't any — Billy's."

"I suspect that is too grand a latchstring for me ever to pull. Miss Hereford has been showing me photographs of the place. What monarchs of trees! What velvet turf! What ivy! What an attractive, spread-out old mansion! And Billy will go home with eyes to see it!" Her own were bright as she ceased.

Burling nodded. "Yet you cannot pull that latchstring?" He put it as a question, and a sadness seemed to underlie his voice and manner.

"All good things are possible," she replied, "even England."

He nodded. "England is a very good thing," he assented.

"You don't need to stand up. Won't one of these seats tempt you?"

"Yes, very much," he answered, in the same quiet voice. "Treat me against yielding, please, for I am due now to have a talk with Sir William Hereford. I am about to break it to him that he has a rent roll and a stable and a few other things that usually interest a man. Do you think he will care? As yet he is such an Arcadian!"

"He will care very much later. I hope and believe Billy will be a good Sir William," said Frances simply.

"The place needs one," responded Burling. "Well — *au revoir*."

"Thank you very much for the book," said Frances as he went, but afterward she glanced at the little volume listlessly.

"I wonder what is the matter with him," she thought. "He seemed to have something on his mind; besides, if he had n't, I 'm sure he would not have forgotten that he said we would read this together."

She gave a little unconscious sigh. "Perhaps it is just as well."

She looked absently toward the still jubilant

robin. "Only one little month," she said to herself. "How it will fly!"

It did fly. Maurice Burling took one more trip to New York and was gone a week, in order, as he said, to do some more cabling. While he was gone, Miss Hereford often took Frances driving with her, and after he returned it somehow happened that the right time never came for the girl-guest to drive with him again alone.

Daily Billy and his uncle were closeted together, while the latter patiently and clearly explained to the young man the responsibilities that awaited him.

"Your father spent a great deal of money," he said to him one day. "A few years will be necessary to put your affairs into a wholesome condition again, but if you are not extravagant, all will come right."

"I won't be extravagant — until the princess comes," returned Sir William.

"And then, certainly not," remarked his uncle, "for she would be against it. She would say, 'Be honest,' would n't she?"

"Oh, is it a question of honesty?"

"Yes. Let me explain again;" and he did so, laboriously, kindly.

"Then I ought not to entertain those beautiful ladies who would n't speak to an American schoolteacher," said Sir William hopefully.

"Certainly. You can live well on a modest scale."

"I 've been thinking a good deal about what you

said, Maurice, and I 've decided that I can't get on without meeting people."

"Of course not."

"So the way I shall do is this: When a new lady talks with me I shall say, 'I love an American school-teacher. You need n't talk to me unless you would talk to her.' "

"Well," Burling smiled, "that would have the merit of novelty, at any rate."

"Then I shall go on to explain that she is a Christian Scientist and that I am one too, and then everything will be understood and I shall not make any friends that the princess won't like when she gets there."

Burling shook his head as he smiled. "There is one Science teaching you are going to find very useful in the new life, old man. It is that it is often better and more effectual to declare the truth mentally than to voice it. Don't go home with a chip on your shoulder. Don't antagonize people. What was the first lesson in Christian Science that the princess ever gave you?"

Sir William nodded. "Yes, I know. I remember: 'Love is the only power.' "

"That 's a very good thing to remember," said Maurice; "also that that Love is n't self-love, but Love spelled with a large L." He smiled kindly at Billy. "You and I are going out to sea figuratively as well as literally, old chap. Our guiding star will be only a memory. We shall have to try to say to each other what we think she would say to us, and to be — worthy of her."

"That 's it, Maurice." The young fellow wrung the other's hand. "We 'll try to be worthy of her, and then she will come to us again, and we will be together forever and ever, and life will be worth living. For me the next nine months look hard, but if I 'm to be a man worthy of such a woman, I must prove myself. I can't help envying you, Maurice, because it is easy for you to leave her." He covered his eyes suddenly, unable to speak further.

Burling pulled toward him the paper covered with figures upon which they had been working, and absently conned its columns.

Relentlessly the summer days flitted, flitted. But one day was left before the family at Waterview were to take the train for their steamer. Each event of that day remained always clear in Frances's memory. First there was the full gathering of the family, including Miss Graves, at the morning lesson in the pagoda. Next followed a long drive, during which Laura Jewett and Frances occupied the back seat of the carriage and Sir William Hereford and his uncle the front seat, the latter driving, as the heir of Ardleigh had not yet cultivated a taste for horses.

Laura appeared to the best advantage on this occasion, and Frances felt grateful for her sprightly talkativeness, for she herself was working against an unnamed depression. From this excursion they did not return until lunch-time, when, to Dudley's decided disapproval, the table in the dining-room was spread for a company, and for the first time

the household at Waterview broke bread together, with Laura Jewett for the guest. Sanders assisted at waiting; and if he was assiduous in serving his American princess, he was not less attentive to her aunt, who might have been a duchess with her piled-up black hair, her clear-cut profile, and her silken gown. No duchess, perhaps, would have exercised such a vigilant eye upon the courses as they came in; but the lunch was faultless, and Miss Graves's black eyes were full of satisfaction before the meal was over.

Miss Hereford's attention swerved constantly from the business of eating to feast her eyes upon her nephew, quiet and dignified, speaking little, but turning sometimes to his princess, who sat next him, to laugh with her over some sally of Laura's. The girl was the life of a company who needed the light chatter she furnished, for full hearts about that board made expression difficult.

When luncheon was finished the quartette of golf players drove away to the links; for kindly Nature seemed in generous mood to have removed the summer heats for this brief farewell season, and had furnished a rain-washed, cooling breeze along with the clear blue vault of heaven.

The players had continued through the summer to divide as in the first foursome they had played; but to-day Sir William demurred.

"This is our last golf," he said. "I think the princess would better play with me to-day."

Laura's bright eyes noted the color that stole up in Frances's cheeks while her fair head nodded assent.

"Be it so, then," said Burling, "but I'm sorry to lose you, Princess," he added, with a smile at Frances.

"Here, here!" exclaimed Laura, stamping her foot. "I utterly refuse to be flouted by both of you just because I'm not a person of rank!"

"Miss Jewett," said Burling gravely, "don't misunderstand my kindness of heart. It pains me in advance to think of the defeat in store for those two kids."

"Don't you be discouraged, Billy," said Frances. "I somehow think I am going to play well to-day!"

"Discouraged!" he repeated, radiantly scornful. "We 'll show them that we are a great team."

As a matter of fact, they did win the first game by a series of lucky chances, and though before the afternoon was over they suffered defeat, the glory of that first victory remained bright.

"Well, you 've had a day of it," said Miss Graves that evening, when her niece came in just in time to dress for dinner.

"It has been full," replied the girl, with a tired, smiling sigh.

"Well, hurry, Frances, and change your dress, or the steak will get cold."

"I mistrust it 's kind of hard for her — kind of hard," mused the housekeeper when she was alone. "Once we 'd have welcomed the last day with a flourish of trumpets; but I declare, everything 's turned out so well, I 'm kind of afraid Frances would just as lief as not this life should go on forever. H'm! If she was any common girl I

should be some worried — some worried; but Frances obeys Scripture and puts not her faith in princes. Look how she 's stood that young sprig kiting off to Windermere all the time. Laura Jewett 's a nice girl, though, if her tongue is hung in the middle. I expect his wits are kind of slow and he likes her snap. Frances has n't got a mite of snap. She was real cute and funny, Laura was, at lunch, and her mother 's got lots of money, and if they should ever meet Sir William again they could hold up their end. Dear knows, I hope he won't ever come back and try to squeeze into our little corner! I suppose Frances would n't care if there was just room for two chairs and a Bible and a 'Science and Health.' But she says poverty 's just as wrong as sickness. She says poverty reflects on the affluence of God and his ability to provide for his children." Miss Graves smiled at her own thoughts. "Maybe before Sir William gets back we 'll have demonstrated more elbow-room than a seven by nine flat. Who knows? *I* ain't saying that anything 's impossible. You don't catch me!"

When Miss Graves and Frances finally sat down to dinner the former's keen eyes took in certain signs in her niece's face.

"It has been hard for her," she thought. "I 'm just as glad as I can be that by noon to-morrow they 'll be gone bag and baggage, nice good folks as they are, and we can begin to stop the princess act and get down to business. She 's an awfully young thing to stand it all."

Miss Graves put the tenderest, juiciest bit of tenderloin on a plate and passed it across to the pink-gowned girl opposite, who immediately laughed and passed it back.

"Our rule," she said warningly. "We 're going to live together and we 're always going to cut the tenderloin in two. That is what I always thought I should do if I ever married. I 've seen wives give their husbands all the tenderloin too much. What are they thinking of? Is n't it any matter about the husband?"

"What a pity, Frances, that you can train only one husband!" commented Miss Graves dryly, as she took the plate and divided the meat.

"And perhaps not one," said the girl.

"I guess 't won't be as bad as that. From all I hear, Jim Peabody 's just ready to jump at you when you get back."

"If he does, I shall jump away."

"Humph!" Miss Graves began eating her dinner. "I should n't wonder. He don't wear his clothes just the way Mr. Burling does, I suppose."

Frances made no answer to this, and the meal progressed rather silently. When it was finished, Miss Graves called the girl's attention to a great golden disk rising behind the distant treetops. "This is n't any indoors night, child," she said. "Let 's have a real luxurious evening on the porch."

"That is what we 'll do," agreed Frances. She carried out comfortable chairs and cushions, and

they ensconced themselves, both watching the queen of heaven deliberately, radiantly setting out upon her royal journey.

"Miss Hereford 's just bubbling over with happiness to-night," said Miss Miranda. "She 's got her boy at dinner with her, and to-morrow she sets out with him for the home she loves so much. No wonder that every time I see her now she is delving into the Christian Science book. She says that her nephew told her the other day it made him so happy that she had learned to rejoice. Who would n't rejoice with the blessings that have come to her?"

"She has a very childlike, sweet nature," returned Frances, "and her great gratitude helps on her understanding. She accepts my answers to her puzzles with a patience that is touching. It seems so hard for her to change her thought about some things."

"Yes, she and I are 'some sot,' as the old woman said; but we 'll get enough out of it to make us bless the day. I think Science is some like vaccination, anyway, Frances. Let two people be exposed to it, and with one it will 'take' and with one it won't. Now I 'm exposing myself to it with the best will in the world. It does seem to wipe all the dust off the closed Bible and open it up to be the living, active power it was meant to be. I 'm going on reading, and when we get back I 'm going to every meeting I can get to; but don't you be disappointed, Frances, if with me it don't 'take' completely. I tell you again, I 'm a hard nut."

Frances smiled at the moon. "If you do all that, Aunt Mira, Science will take care of the rest. It takes out all the hurry to recall what we say so often — that we are already living in eternity."

"It 's just as straight as a string, in your head, is n't it?" said Miss Graves wistfully. "I feel richer every day, Frances, to think that you are my little girl."

CHAPTER XXV

BY MOONLIGHT

AFTER dinner that evening Burling and his nephew wandered out upon the broad veranda at the front of the house. Miss Hereford wished to join them, but after sunset she was afraid of the open air. Once she would have announced her reason for remaining indoors; but now she was ashamed of it, and so contented herself by looking through the windows at the two forms she loved. Burling was stretched in a wicker reclining chair. His nephew was pacing with long strides up and down the piazza.

"Do you think it too soon for me to go, Maurice?" he asked at last, pausing suddenly before his uncle's chair."

"Go where?"

"I told you I was not going to speak to the princess until the very last. This is the very last. To-morrow morning everything will be hurried."

"Ah! Yes, I've no doubt they have finished dinner."

Sir William held out his hand. "Wish me luck, Maurice."

Burling took it. "My dear boy, I've never done anything else since you were born."

"It means almost as much for you as for me this time, Maurice."

"Not quite, Billy, not quite; but," solemnly, "as your mother sees us now, I wish you luck; I wish you — yes, old chap — I wish you the blessing of blessings."

He sank back in his chair, and remained there motionless in the moonlight until he saw two figures cross the grass slowly toward the pagoda. He watched them, the girl's thin rosy gown trailing its lacy length along the turf, until they disappeared at the entrance to the pavilion; then he rose with a spring, took two turns up and down the piazza, and went into the house.

When Sir William reached Miss Graves's porch he smiled with satisfaction at discovering so easily the object of his search. A more sophisticated lover might have feared his lady's seclusion with headache after so full and fatiguing a day; but not only was this young man unused to connecting a thought of weakness with his princess, but the whole world of women and their vapors and worries was a sealed book to him. He had known he should find Frances, but just where or how was not so clear, as their evenings had never been spent together.

"Isn't it a glorious night?" he asked, approaching.

"About as near perfect as they make 'em, Mr. William. We've got another chair here. Won't you sit down?" Thus Miss Graves in amiable accents, the while she was thinking, —

"Why could n't he have stayed away this one more evening? It 's just the night for a beau, but not this kind. It 's dreadful upsetting."

"I think I won't sit down," replied the visitor, coming up the step. "I want to take the princess away for a little while. Will you forgive me, Miss Graves, if we leave you alone?"

"Oh, Billy, I don't feel like walking to-night," said Frances. "What miles we traveled this afternoon! Won't you sit down?"

"Yes; but in the pagoda. It is beautiful in the pagoda now, for the water is alive with silvery scales, as though schools of goldfish were sporting. You can come that far, can't you, Princess?"

"Yes, indeed. I will come. Excuse me a minute."

The girl rose and disappeared into the house. Sir William, for greater convenience in talking to the housekeeper, instantly dropped into the seat she had vacated.

"Miss Graves, my heart is aching to-night," he began abruptly, "because I must leave her."

The housekeeper suddenly sat up very straight.

"You will take great care of her while I am gone?"

"I calculate to always take care of my niece, Mr. William."

"You won't have to always," he said, "only until I am more worthy. She loves you very much, and so I shall, too. You will always be welcome at Ardleigh. Remember, because I would n't be cruel to you and not let you see her."

He ceased, for Frances emerged from the door.

"Every bit of the starch went out of my knees and elbows," said Miss Graves afterward, when in time long yet to come she and her niece talked of this evening. "I did n't know whether to speak or whether to be dumb; and when I 'm in doubt on that score, I generally hold my tongue."

She certainly did on this occasion. She sat limply and watched the young couple move away in the moonlight, and tried to recover the wits which Sir William's low-spoken words had scattered.

"Does Frances know this, or is it my duty to call after her that there 's a volcano going to blow up in that pagoda? Oh, law! Will to-morrow noon ever get here? But then, there 's nothing half so sweet in life as love's young dream, and if it 's a romance, I must say they both look it; and she 'd be Lady Hereford — and maybe it 's just what she 's wishing for, and what made her look so tired around her eyes at dinner. You know well enough, Miranda Graves, you 've been half out of your wits sometimes for fear she would fall in love with him, and he philandering off with another girl. She 's just about made him, and I 've read stories about statues falling in love with their sculptor, and things like that, and this would n't be half so crazy, and she 'll be a grand titled lady, and Jim Peabody — Law! take a back seat, Jim!" Sudden tears blinded her eyes. "We 'll go back and sit down together, Jim. I could n't even be her housekeeper over there, and you — why, you would n't, so to say, do for her footman."

Arrived at the pagoda, Frances's escort seated her in the hammock, with pillows at her back, and took a chair close by. There were the schools of sporting goldfish in the Sound and a faint summer breeze stirring in the treetops. The silence was unbroken until finally Sir William spoke.

"I don't like to think of strangers in our pagoda, Princess."

"There will be none until another year," she answered.

"There have been many beautiful evenings this summer when I might have been out here with you. I have so often wished it. Sometimes I have thrown the books together and risen to find you; but I always said to myself: 'Shall I make her talk to an ignorant fellow?' So I closed my teeth and went at the arithmetic again and the history — the things known to schoolboys half my age."

"It showed strength of character in you, Billy. I admire it."

"In the afternoons I have gone oftener than you think to the Jewetts'. I asked them not to tell you about it, but I want you to know now. I have gone there because they were kind enough to help me with the affairs of the day all over the world. The magazines, the papers that inform one, — Miss Jewett had so many. She is very bright, and she seemed to like to read with me and talk things over so I should not be so ignorant. And she understands now. She reads the book, and her mother often talked to us both about Divine Love,

and helped us to realize what were the most important things to know. I was very happy at the Jewetts', for they love you and understood how I wanted to be fit to be with you."

"That was good," said Frances, beginning to be vaguely uneasy. Surely he realized that this was the last of their being together. "When you go home you will find Scientists, and wherever you find them they will be like brothers and sisters to you, for their faith is always the same and will make you always feel at home. I shall think of you every morning and every evening, Billy, and you know that space cannot divide thought."

"That is the best thing to help the long winter to pass," he replied, "and we shall be reading the same lesson every morning. Let us do it at the same hour."

"We will; and when you waken every morning, say over the Ninety-first Psalm. It will give you a good start for the day's work."

"Do you do that, Princess?"

"Yes."

"Then I will."

Sir William slipped his hand into his pocket and took out two velvet boxes. "Here, Princess, are two remembering rings."

He opened one of the boxes, and there flashed in the moonlight a diamond embedded in a gold band of the same width. Setting it aside, he opened the other. It was a hoop of sapphires.

He smiled at her. "You have n't the blue gown on. I 'm sorry you put on Maurice's gown instead of mine."

Frances started, and her eyes dilated at sight of the rings. "Why do you call it Maurice's?"

"I asked him once why you ever wore anything but the blue dress, and he said he liked the pink better."

Frances's glance lingered a moment on the rose and white stripes, and then flew back to the open ring boxes. "What have you done, Billy?" she asked.

"I made you take off one ring I gave you. Now I give you one that you must wear forever."

"It is far too handsome for me," she said, drawing back as he tried to take her hand.

"Princess, as if anything could be too handsome for you! They are only very shining little blue stones. The other is for me, and you are to put it on for me. We will say again what you taught me then, and what I have found so true, 'Love is the only Power.'"

"I don't think it would be right for me to take that beautiful ring from you, Billy."

"But I don't want it," he answered simply. "It is too small for me. Besides, everything that I have will always be yours."

"No, no! Don't say that! You will be born into a great world when you go home. You have no idea what charming and delightful people you are going to meet. You will think of me as a dear friend always. As yet you scarcely know any one but me."

"That is what Maurice says, and it is very stupid," replied Sir William gently. "I call you

Princess now, but when I am far away and cannot see you, it will be Queen. Maurice told me something very pretty when we were talking about your pink gown. It was poetry — something about your looking like the

'Queen rose of the rosebud garden of girls.'

Oh, my queen, my princess, how can I face nine months — nine months!" He took her hand and bowed his forehead upon it. It was only for an instant.

"I won't be a coward," he said suddenly, sitting up. "What a small part of eternity is nine months! I prefer it. I wish to do it; and I will make myself such that you need never be ashamed of me. When I come back to get you I shall not need to apologize for myself."

"To get me!" Frances echoed the words faintly, still only half believing that she understood his meaning.

"Yes; to carry you to Ardleigh — your home and mine."

"Billy, you don't mean — you can't mean — that you wish to marry me!"

"Why, Princess, have I ever had another thought since I had any thoughts at all?"

She waited an instant, and her heart fluttered anxiously.

"I never once have thought of it, Billy," she said very gently.

"That is strange; but you will think of it now."

She made no effort to take away the hand he held. Even her fingers closed upon his as she spoke.

"We must do in this just as in every other problem. We have come to a hard place on the hillside again; but the Shepherd will show us how to go if we listen for his voice."

"But don't you love me, Princess?" asked the young fellow, with acute surprise.

"Indeed I do, Billy, but not in the way to wish to marry you."

He looked at her during a long silence. "There is a lot of your life that I don't know about," he said at last. "Is there any one you do love in that way?"

She blushed like a rose. "You must n't ask me that, Billy," she returned hastily, "for I have never asked myself."

"Love *me*, Princess!" he burst forth. "I am working for you — I am waiting for you. I need you more than any one else does."

"Billy," she began again gently, "I could promise you that I shall never marry any one, only that such a promise would be wrong and foolish. I am confident that I shall not. Your welfare, your success, is of tremendous importance to me. I hold myself at your service. You can count upon me. You know we both want the same thing, — to listen for the Shepherd's voice, and to follow and rejoice all the rugged way."

"You may miss me more than you think when I 'm gone," said Sir William brokenly.

"I shall miss you sadly."

"And if the Shepherd leads you to love me more, then I may come to you?"

"Yes, Billy. We will both listen and both follow, and we shall write to each other, and have so much pleasure in our friendship."

"Then it won't be of any use for me to study any more, will it?" he said simply.

"Oh, it will!" she replied earnestly. "All your friends" —

"I don't care for them."

"How about Sir William Hereford? Have you no pride in him — no respect for him?"

"Maurice says I know a good deal more of books now than many of my fox-hunting ancestors."

"Ah, but you don't belong to that day and generation. You are my friend. I wish to be proud of you from all standpoints."

"I suppose I should be rather a cad to give up."

"I know you 'll go on, Billy. You know too much of divine Science to sink back and be selfish and despondent, even if all things in life do not go to your liking. Divine Love will surely meet every need that you have. If it is really a need of me, I shall be forthcoming; but we by no means can always tell what our real needs are, and we can always look to Him to teach us."

Sir William drew a long sigh. "I must love you enough now to leave you and not make you any more trouble — I see it; but if I 'd known you felt like this I should n't have stayed at the Jewetts' so much when I might have been with you." His dejected eyes fell to the ring. "I think you need that to remember me by now."

"No, indeed, Billy. Nothing will ever make me forget you for a single day."

Her tone brought a bright look to his face. "I shall come to you next summer," he said.

"Very well; I shall always be glad to see you."

"And you may change your mind. Meanwhile I am your best friend, as you are mine, and whenever you look at this ring you will think of me and of the blue summer days we have spent together here in the pagoda." He slipped the ring on the third finger of the hand he held. "Do not take it off until I have gone. Now put on mine and give me a good wish, Princess."

"May it be a silent one?"

"Yes, if you like, my dearest."

She put on the ring, that flashed in the moonlight.

"When that wish of mine comes true, Billy," she said, smiling into his wistful eyes, "we shall both be very happy."

"That is what I want, my Princess," he answered.

As soon as Frances came in to go to bed that night, her aunt's searching eyes at once found the splendid ring she wore.

"Oh, child!" she said, suddenly sitting down. "You 've done it, then! Just give me a minute, Frances. I 've been holding my breath for the last hour."

"This ring is only a parting friendly gift. You need n't be excited, Aunt Mira."

"He told me he was going to ask you. If you don't want I should talk about it, though, I won't."

"He did ask me; but what does he know yet of life or people?"

"You said no!" ejaculated Miss Graves, overwhelmed.

"Certainly."

"Well, Frances Rogers, you 're a cool one. I surmised you wanted him, child."

"You surmised wrong."

"What you have given up, Frances Rogers!"

The girl turned heavy eyes upon her gazing companion. "Forgive me for being awfully tired to-night, Aunt Mira. I can't talk."

"And you shan't, little girl. You shan't be hectored," responded Miss Miranda with quick sympathy. She rose and began to undress, and no further word passed between them save a good-night.

But Miss Graves could not sleep. Long after her bedfellow was still she lay thinking of her. To be young and pretty and receive proposals from English lords in the moonlight, to refuse them but to accept shining sapphires in friendship, and then walk off to teach urchins in a public school — all this seemed quite exciting and perplexing to Miss Miranda. She had gained her niece, but she had lost telling Lucy Smith and Mrs. Peabody about Ardleigh — a pastime which in anticipation had made the last hour fly swiftly.

At last, when her thoughts had long run riot, to her surprise and consternation a heavy sob broke

from her quiet bedfellow beside her. Miss Graves could feel the blood rush to her own face. Was it possible that Frances was awake and crying? Would it be best to take any notice? The sobs came oftener, became uncontrollable. "Oh, Frances!" she said at last timidly.

The girl turned over toward her and threw an arm around her aunt. Miss Miranda could feel the cold stones of the ring against her cheek.

"Yes, I 'm cry-crying. B-Billy is so de-dear. I wi-wish it could have — been B-Billy!"

Miss Graves patted the hand with a soothing rhythm.

"I wonder if all girls are just so?" she reflected. "Seems 's if I was n't. I would n't have that widower that asked me, of course. I did n't like him; but, pity's sake! if a creature like Sir William had made love to me, I believe I 'd have been too dazzled to say no. I guess most girls would. They 'd have taken him with what brains he had and prayed the Lord to give him more."

"Maybe 't will be him some day, dear," she said comfortingly. "Don't you think he 's going to make a real smart man, after all?"

"Y-yes," Frances did.

"Then it will all come right, and after a while he 'll ask you again, and you 'll answer him different."

"No, never — never!" was all Miss Graves could gather from the incoherent statements sobbed into her ear.

"What does she want to hold her hot potato

and squeal for?" thought Miss Miranda. "Why can't she leave him if she's bound she won't take him? I don't ever remember of being that way."

But she continued her rhythmical patting, and at last Frances fell asleep.

CHAPTER XXVI

BON VOYAGE

"Do I look very — very — sorry?" asked Frances the next morning, standing before her aunt for inspection, with a rather doleful little smile.

She had resisted the alluring freshness of a pink and white shirtwaist which lay in her drawer, and donned the favorite blue gown, whose rumpled condition had made her discard it the evening before.

"No, dear. When folks are twenty they can cry all night and only look the fresher, like an April day."

"You 're very comforting."

Frances dreaded the morning's ordeal more than words could express. How was she to be unconscious with Billy's sapphires gleaming on her finger? Yet how could she deal him an unnecessary blow by taking the ring off?

One reflection consoled her. Sir William's countenance would contradict the seeming fact conveyed by his gift. Vain expectation! The usual quiet dignity of the young man's behavior proved unaltered this morning. If he looked a little pale, that was natural under the circum-

stances, and the minute Frances came in sight such a look of dumb affection waked in his eyes that she blushed from very dread of doing so.

The travelers were all on the broad piazza together, dressed and equipped for the start. Maurice Burling was giving some additional directions to the coachman as to the disposition of the contents of the stable.

Sir William was standing beside Frances, his teeth set and his face pale, when Sanders approached her.

"Your 'ighness," he said, low and respectfully, "when I hopened the package you sent me yesterday the moment was one of the 'appiest of my life." He paused, obliged to wink back tears, for which his master loved him. "To think you should give me your own 'Science and 'Ealth' and your book of songs — the very ones I 've seen in your 'ands hall summer! They 'll make" — he gulped — "they 'll make a good man of me or hever you come to Hardleigh. Good-by, your 'ighness."

"Good-by, Sanders." Her blush faded as she listened, and saw the tender-hearted fellow eye her ring.

But the color rose again as Miss Hereford, advancing, looked at the jewels on the hand she took. She led Frances to the piazza rail.

"My child," said the little lady, regarding the girl with loving eyes, "there is so much more in my heart for you than I can ever put into words! You must know all I would say. I am old to

change my thought, Frances, and very slow; but I believe that to acquaint one's self with your God is to be at peace, and I am trying. He only knows when we shall meet again; but you will write to me, dear. We have grown too near together ever to be really parted; and when the time is ripe for you to come to Ardleigh, remember how wide its gates will swing to usher in the most welcome guest who ever came to us!"

Frances bowed her head to receive the kiss following this, and then Burling, hat in hand, approached with business-like haste.

"How tired he looks!" was the girl's quick thought, surprised by the weary lines about the eyes that smiled at her.

"Time, tide, and Long Island trains wait for no man," he declared.

"If only Miss Hereford would go away!" thought Frances, a little pulse beating in her throat. "No, he did n't buy this ring for Billy. He never saw it before."

"Time certainly does n't wait on Long Island," she answered. "The summer has sped."

"I 'm glad you can say so. It seems rather trite for Aunt Eleanor and me to give you any more verbal thanks, Miss Rogers. I dare say she has been trying to," a kind glance down at Miss Hereford, "but I assure you, actions shall speak louder than words when you come to us."

"It 's the last time I shall hear his voice, — the last time," she was saying to herself repeatedly, while she made some response. Then she gave her

cold hand to his offered one, and he turned back to the carriages.

Now Miss Hereford also moved away, for her nephew approached, pale, misty eyed.

"We 're going, Princess," he said hoarsely, taking the hand Maurice had just relinquished. "Your little hand is cold, Princess, Princess," he added tenderly. "It is n't quite easy for you, is it, dear? I feel as if something was breaking inside me. Yes, yes, Maurice, I 'm coming. Oh, good-by, *darling!*" He stooped and kissed her impetuously, and the big drops rained from his eyes.

A minute more, and the carriages whirled down the driveway.

"Wave, wave, Frances!" exhorted Miss Graves. "They 're waving."

"Who?" inquired the girl, keeping her position behind a pillar.

"Oh, all of them. Some of them, anyway. Miss Hereford is. I 'll wave for you." She snatched Frances's much-squeezed and rumpled handkerchief and kept both fluttering until the carriages had turned the corner and disappeared.

"Well!" exclaimed Miss Miranda with a long breath. "That chapter 's ended." She seated herself in one of the wicker chairs and fanned herself. "I 'm afraid you missed seeing Dudley's face when she clapped eyes on your ring, Frances. It was as good as a play. I don't think she 'll quite sense things till she gets on board the steamer."

The housekeeper's keen eyes remained fixed on the blue figure drooping by the pillar.

"Now, don't you take it to heart 'cause that nice boy kissed you. 'T was a mercy and a wonder that was the worst explosion we had. I wish he 'd wanted to kiss me. I could have hugged him well — the poor big child! Now, Frances, now!"

She placed the girl's poor little handkerchief back in her hand.

"Just a minute, Aunt Mira. Just a minute. It 's all wrong and untrue and unreal — every feeling that I 'm having!"

"Yes, dear, but you 'd be a statue instead of a girl if you were n't sort of rattled and broken up," responded Miss Miranda gently. "Now they 've gone, and they can't hang on to you any longer, and we have n't one sprig of royalty in the family. We 're just plain folks, — a school-teacher and her maiden aunt. We 're going to shut up this house good and proper, and we 're going to say good-by to the Jewetts" —

"A long good-by," put in Frances. "Laura told me yesterday that her mother has decided to take her to Italy for the winter."

"All right, Frances, all right. Can't scare us," responded Miss Miranda brightly, though inwardly she regretted this loss from her niece's life. "We 'll say good-by to the Jewetts, set sail for Melrose, and while you 're seeing about your school business I 'll find us a flat and fix it up. My, does n't it seem a long time ago that you first suggested it, and said we 'd go off and be a family! Well, well" — the speaker's eyes rested on the splendid

jewels glowing velvety blue on her niece's hand —"that is a superb ring, Frances Rogers."

"I can't bear it!" exclaimed the girl, pulling it off with a sudden motion. "Poor Billy!" she added brokenly, and slipped it back again.

"Aunt Mira, I seem to be all mortal mind this morning. I must work. Give me an hour, and I will be ready for anything. I must help Billy and I must help myself. Then we will put this business through quickly. I want to get away from here. I grudge every minute now that keeps us from home."

"I, too, Frances. The grass shan't grow under our feet, you 'd better believe."

It did not, indeed, and one day soon afterward aunt and niece took the same morning train which had borne away the English family.

"I don't know about you," said Miss Graves, when their bags were in the rack and themselves ensconced in their seats, "but I 've got a claim of fatigue in my step-things. If I did n't know better, I should say the calves of my legs had a cramp apiece."

Frances laughed. "I have a claim of fatigue, too; but I know that with me it comes more from a worry than from the running around I 've done."

"What 's your worry, little one? Kind of afraid of your new scholars?"

"No, it is n't that. You remember the day I told you of my business conference with Miss Hereford, and that she had induced me to accept more money than I thought fair?"

"Yes."

"Well, the very day after that Mr. Burling's manner to me changed."

"Oh, pshaw, child!"

"Yes, it did. The thought gnaws at me all the time that he thinks I have been mercenary."

"Well, supposing the great Mogul *did* think so — what then?"

"It would take out all my pleasure in it. It does."

"Oh, pshaw! That 's what it is to be twenty instead of fifty! That would never worry me a cent's worth; but I 'll tell you I 'm sure you 're mistaken. I 'm as sure as I sit here that they 'd have given you Ardleigh itself for what you did for them."

Frances sighed unconsciously and looked out on the flying landscape.

"Well, well," said Miss Miranda in a different tone, "it 's a good thing you mentioned Mr. Burling, too. He gave me something for you. I 'd clean forgotten it."

"What was it? What?"

"'T was a letter. I was n't to give it to you until he sailed; and by the time he sailed we were up to our ears cleaning house. Now, where did I put that letter?" musingly.

"Aunt Mira! It 's in your bag, of course." The girl rose and with a hand that shook reached for the bag.

"I 'm sure I hope so. If I 'd only thought, I might have given it to you days ago just as well

as not. H'm, h'm," pulling over the contents of the bag, "I hope I did n't leave it in my top drawer."

"Aunt Mira!"

"No, sir," reflectively; "I remember thinking that this bag was going with me and I 'd better put it here so 's to be sure not to forget. Do keep your hands away, Frances, while I look. A body would think you had the St. Vitus dance. If I *had* put it in my top drawer I 'd have come across it in packing, and 't would have been better after all, for now it seems just as if I must have pushed it out somehow when I put the things in."

"This outside pocket — you have n't looked there!"

"That 's so — and, well, here 't is at last!"

Frances caught the thick envelope from her aunt's slow hand. "You don't suppose he has written about the money?" she asked, her voice unsteady.

"Why, do quiet down, child! You 've thought about that till you 're morbid."

Miss Graves leaned back and watched her companion as she broke the seal and unfolded the sheets of paper. The eager young eyes traveled down the page. She had not finished one when hands and paper dropped into her lap, and she grew so pale that Miss Graves started.

"Well, what 's the man at?" inquired Miss Miranda sharply. "It 's a mighty good thing for him he *has* sailed if" — here her niece turned slowly around toward her with a smile.

"That smile," declared Miss Graves later, "I shall never forget. It was n't meant for me, and I knew then it was n't. Her eyes were looking at something miles beyond the back of my head. I asked again what was going on, and she never said a word, but went back to her letter."

Miss Miranda continued to watch the face, rosy enough now, as Frances read page after page. Her curiosity grew with the minutes.

"It 's the history of his life, I guess, by the length," she remarked.

No answer.

When the girl had finished the last word, the sheets gently dropped to her lap, and she turned her eyes toward the window.

"Kind of warm in the car, don't you think," ventured Miss Graves.

No answer.

"It 's a wonder to me they don't open more ventilators."

For reply Frances took up the letter and commenced again at the beginning.

"Well," thought Miss Miranda, "evidently three 's a crowd. I 'm dog-tired. I guess I 'll go to sleep."

She slipped down in the seat, put a small shawl at the back of her neck, and was soon unconscious.

Frances read on. She did not cease until she had read the letter through three times. Then she looked at Miss Graves. Her mouth was open, and a delicate snore rose and fell in rhythm. "Poor Aunt Mira!" thought the girl, with a rush of com-

passion. Then she loosened the high collar and cravat of her blouse, and unfastened from her neck a long, slender gold chain which she had worn from childhood. Removing her glove, she took off the sapphire ring, and, slipping it upon the chain, clasped the latter about her neck again and fastened her blouse over it. Then, leaning her elbow on the window sill, she covered her eyes with her hand, and withdrew, to gaze with bounding pulses upon the new earth blossoming to her mental vision.

This was the letter: —

You have just crossed the grass to the pagoda with Billy. Quickly, before you can say "Yes" to him — before you belong to any one — I am going to tell you that I love you, Frances. I love you! I love you! I cannot write it often enough! I could not say it often enough had I gained the sweet opportunity. This is the first love letter of my life, and I would crowd into it all the fullness of a heart that loves but once. When I was a boy like Billy, I cared for a girl as he cares for you. She died — my little sweetheart — before ever I had reason to write to her; and now I know what that flame was compared to this which I offer, glowing and holy, at your altar.

Yet youth seeks youth, and you will perhaps better understand Billy's fervor than you would mine. You are his princess. To me you are like the arbutus of your own New England woods, — brave, hardy, pure, fragrant, winning your way against and through obstacles by force of very

gentleness. That day when I returned from New York and you came out to me in the pink and white gown, I knew that I loved my arbutus flower forever and forever. I believed I might succeed, too, in winning her. There were times when we were alone that that more than self-possession in your sweet eyes seemed to falter and stir me to adoring hope. For a few weeks I lived in paradise. Then came the fruit of the tree of knowledge. Billy frankly told me his love. With every word that fell from his lips he asked me to lay down my life.

So that is why I sit here in my study with your sweet face printed on my heart, while you are perhaps at this very moment giving yours in the pagoda. I believe you will not regret it. The boy will make a fine man, and you will be a lady who will shine when your time comes to adorn that long line of Lady Herefords in the portrait gallery at Ardleigh. The Hereford diamonds will become you; but when I see you in that dazzling array I shall think of the pink gown that once clothed my arbutus flower; and that day when I meet Lady Hereford will be long hence, for I must be changed before I can look upon you again.

I have made the crowning sacrifice for Billy's life and reason, and I shall know your approval. You have pointed me a way that I shall go; and I ask you not to write me or attempt in your goodness to answer this. No word of yours now can be to me what my memories are; so good-night, my darling. Blessing came with you; may bless-

ing go with you wherever your dainty feet tread. Billy's book of life is unsullied. You can write upon it whatever you will. There are many stained pages in mine, but, my beloved one, there shall never be another; there can never be another — for I have known you, and in my heart a purifying incense will rise forever: it is the fragrance of the arbutus flower.

CHAPTER XXVII

FRANCES'S CORRESPONDENCE

MISS GRAVES had a good nap. They were only a half hour out from Long Island City when she awoke sufficiently to remain awake.

"Well, I must have dropped off," she remarked, struggling slowly to an upright posture. "Have I slept long?"

"Yes — no — I really don't know," replied her niece. "Let me look at my watch. Why, yes, we have only a little while."

"How are things?" went on Miss Miranda, straightening her bonnet. "Has the world kind of settled down again?"

"It is still whirling, I suppose," returned the girl, with a little laugh.

"H'm! I see you 're chirked up, my dear. What 's the news? You seemed to be learning your letter by heart last time I looked at you. Let 's hear if you 've got it perfect."

"It was a — a confidential letter, Aunt Mira. He wanted to tell me a — a circumstance of his life."

"Circumstance! I thought it was the whole story. I 'm sorry," glancing at the fresh face curiously, "that you have to blush so for him."

"Some time — some time I can tell you, Aunt Mira."

"You can, eh?" said Miss Graves a little uneasily. "I hope it is n't that kind of a circumstance that 's going to affect our flat."

"No — no, indeed," the girl hastened to assure her.

"Don't look so happy you scare a person out of her wits, then, or you 'll make me wish I had left that letter in the top drawer."

"If — you — had, Aunt Mira!"

"Well, if I had?"

"Why — I should still be worrying about that money matter."

"He says that was all right, does he?"

"He just the same as says so. We 're nearly there, Aunt Mira."

Miss Graves's "faculty" now came into play again, and before many weeks had passed that modest castle in the air, an apartment for two, had settled to earth, and aunt and niece were settled in it.

The chief interest of the winter to the pair was Frances's correspondence. The girl kept her glorifying secret locked in her own heart; but even Miss Miranda found the affairs of Lucy Smith and Mrs. Peabody rather prosy compared to the letters that still connected the little flat with the gay doings of the Jewetts in Florence and the quiet household at Ardleigh.

Miss Graves bravely dealt her old friends the

shock of stating her interest and sympathy in her niece's faith. Indeed, Mrs. Peabody and Mrs. Smith held many a conclave over the affairs of the reunited pair. They agreed that no hen with one chicken was ever prouder or busier than Miranda; and as they were very fond of Frances, and noted her increased charm and happiness, they also agreed that few hens had so much excuse for pride.

Into the inner life of aunt and niece they never penetrated. It was only characteristic of Miranda that her answers to inquiries about their summer should be non-committal, commonplace, and vaguely general.

"How I could make Lucy Smith's eyes bulge out!" she used sometimes to say to herself while busy with the household work, while Frances was at school; "but Frances would n't like it, so I 'll keep mum."

The young men who had known Frances most of her life and of late years had been developing increasingly romantic inclinations toward her, returned eagerly to their allegiance. Miss Graves listened to the conversations which went on sometimes in the little parlor, and often laughed over the memory of them while Frances was at school and she herself at work in her spotless kitchen.

"I declare, I do feel some nights as if I must put those poor fellows out of their misery!" she would say to herself. "I feel like telling 'em not to waste their time. It 's no use for such as them to try to make an impression on an Anglomaniac!"

Frances's letters to Ardleigh were her chief care. For a time Sir William's impassioned epistles reached her every few days; but after a while, under the influence of the careful and helpful letters she sent him at regular periods, he quieted to more coherent and calm responses.

Miss Hereford's missives were the ones she opened and read with most eagerness, and Miss Graves noted with much relief that the letter of the train, which for a time she had been tempted to wish had been mislaid, never had a successor.

In one of Miss Hereford's early communications she told of Mr. Burling's success in finding the right person to appreciate the situation sympathetically and act as resident tutor to Sir William.

"The young man assures me it is nothing but a pleasure to teach Billy," she wrote, "as the latter's eagerness to learn does not wane. Mr. Deane has a very desirable refinement as well as much learning, and be sure it was not long before Billy had told him of you. You would have been pleased with the frankness with which Mr. Burling told the tutor of the help Billy had received in Science. Indeed, it was necessary to explain, for let me tell you, dear child, in place of the family prayers to which the servants at Ardleigh have been accustomed for generations, they must all file in every morning now to hear Sir William read the day's lesson from the Bible and 'Science and Health.' I can see that those who were here long before he was born consider it a form of madness; but it is

touching to see the love in their eyes as they watch him while he reads, so earnestly and unconsciously. I fancy they are hearing a good deal about the new faith from Sanders. I know Billy had to request him not to play 'Shepherd, show me how to go' on his accordion in the servants' hall. The dear boy can't sing it now, with you so far away.

"Mr. Burling and I sometimes speak of those afternoon teas at Waterview, when you used to make such kind effort to answer our questions. Dear child, I 'm afraid we perplexed you very often, we were so slow at the new tongue. Divine Love helps us now, through the added responsibility we feel to know the truth for our boy's sake. I can scarcely bear to tell you of the sad scene I had with my dear rector. He was really pale with shock when he discovered our change, but I assured him that Sir William would do nothing to pull down established customs outside his own household, and he had to be satisfied with that.

"After he was gone I cried a little, but I felt so happy that I had stood by what I had proved to be good. Mr. Burling helped me wonderfully, of course. He was present when the rector called, and in that cool, assured, courteous way of his silenced the poor man when he wanted to revile. Ah, well, Mr. Burling made him understand our position; and when he cited the change in Billy and asked the rector to explain it reasonably, our dear old friend mumbled a good deal and soon went away. I am going to have him and his wife to dinner next week.

"Billy lets me read your charming letters. He lives on them. I am glad you and Miss Graves are so well and happy."

A good deal of prayerful study went into every one of those epistles that Frances wrote Sir William. She was so desirous to imply always the steady, unchanging regard she felt for him, the interest, the helpfulness, and to make it quite distinct that there was nothing more.

Miss Hereford might have read between the lines of those letters, — lines written in a distinct and legible hand, clean-cut and reliable as the writer herself. However, the English spinster considered them simply as models of what a maid should say to a man situated as these two were, nd waited the springtime with her nephew, rejoicing in the increase of manliness and assurance which was daily manifested in him.

With spring the Jewetts left Italy and went to England. A cordial invitation met them in London to come at once to Ardleigh. They accepted with alacrity, and ten days after that which saw them driving through the grounds to the old manor, Frances Rogers came home from school and walked into her little parlor. It felt genial after the raw air without, and on the table she quickly espied a small glass of trailing arbutus. Miss Graves, entering by another door, was just in time to see her niece spring forward and fall on her knees before the little table, with her face close to the blossoms.

"I calculated you 'd be pleased to see 'em this early," said Miss Miranda, with a smile that broadened slowly as low ejaculations broke from the girl.

"The earlier the better — the earlier the better," exclaimed Frances softly, and as she rose her aunt was amazed to see that she smiled through tears.

"What in the world, child" — began Miss Graves, and paused because she was clasped in her niece's arms.

"I have said all along that everything would come right when the arbutus came, — everything — everything!"

"Frances Rogers, what 's the matter with you?" Miss Graves pushed the other off at arm's length, her astonished eyes meeting those that laughed like sunlight in the rain. "Have you got too tired, child?" She gave her a little shake. "Christian Scientists have n't any business to get run down in the spring." Another shake. "How would you like to take some malt extract, Frances Rogers? Don't you know there ain't any fatigue in mind?"

"Oh, don't shake me any more, Aunt Mira!" laughed the girl, wiping her eyes. "I was so glad to see the arbutus. It was so sweet of you — so *sweet* of you — to get them. I 've been wondering if it would be any use to go out into the woods and look for some Saturday, but now," her breath caught, "now it is all right."

"Well, I should think so," said Miss Graves suspiciously. "What is there to come right, I should like to know? Everything seems just about as it should be to me."

"But I love the spring, I love the spring," responded the girl. "Don't you? The arbutus and the bluebird, the sweetest, bravest things in nature, they hurry so to tell us that winter, the winter of our discontent, is over!"

"Winter of our discontent!" repeated Miss Graves, aggrieved. "It 's been the most contented winter of my life."

"Has n't it been a happy winter!" agreed the girl with light-hearted inconsistency. She drew her aunt down upon the little sofa beside her. "Here is a letter I just found in the box from Laura. It is postmarked Darrington, so they are at Ardleigh."

"I did n't know they expected to go there."

"Neither did I. Let us see what she says." Frances opened the letter and read; at first aloud, then her lips closed, and holding the sheet so her aunt could see, they both scanned its lines silently.

MY DEAR FRANCES, — Are n't you amazed to find us here? I am. I feel guilty, too, every minute, for seeing this beautiful, romantic, picturesque place before you do. I 'm glad, though, that you should hear from some one who has not seen him all winter how improved and charming Sir William is. The warmth of his welcome touched and delighted us. In fact, both he and his aunt are as kind as if we were near and dear relatives. Even Dudley seems to approve our coming. She likes my gowns and hats, which she declares are "chick." Of course we realize that

Sir William and Miss Hereford consider us a link with you, and we shine by reflected light. Sir William has taken me on many a delightful tramp already. He is relaxing the constant work and study, and his aunt says I have come just in time to help him play.

All our conversational roads are very apt to lead to Rome — or, rather, the princess. It reminds me of last summer at Windermere, when I delved into "Harper's Weekly" and half a dozen magazines with him, so he might inform his mind for the sake of the princess. He never left me any illusions in his calls at Windermere. He is so different now, so easily master of himself and his house.

What a domain awaits your highness! I feel ridiculously and inappropriately modern everywhere I go, and yet completely enchanted all the time. Oh, I 'll be so good, Lady Hereford, if you 'll let me come sometimes and play in your front yard!

Was n't I good last summer not to say anything when I knew — oh, just everything? But I was a little jealous of you, Frances. You were the principal girl, and that is what I always liked to be. I 'd rather own it, because I 'm trying just as hard as I can to grow up to that higher plane where you and mother are, and I know honesty comes first. I 'm not jealous now, and I long for you to come and see where you are going to be so happy. It 's the strangest thing, but I can't picture you here. I try to, and you just gently slip

away to Waterview, or Windermere, or Boston every time. Another reason for you to invite me when you do come.

Wait till you see the portrait gallery! There were some pretty Lady Herefords, and Sir William's mother you'd know at once was Mr. Burling's sister; but some of them are frumps, — just between you and me.

To my great disappointment, Mr. Burling is n't here. I believe he 's in London. Miss Hereford says he 's stood right by Sir William all winter, helping him in all ways as devotedly as ever; but now that the young man's chrysalis state is passed, Mr. Burling told his aunt he was n't going to remain to see Billy torn in pieces by match-making mammas who are ignorant that he will look at nothing lower than royalty. I can hear him say it, can't you?

When she had read the last word of the letter, Miss Graves lifted her eyes covertly to her niece's face. The sun had gone under a cloud.

"Frances," she said, as the girl folded the letter, "it 's like pulling teeth to lose you, but — is that what you meant about the springtime?"

"No — perhaps I was dreaming."

"Now, don't you feel bad because Laura 's got there first. She 'll continue to be last, just as she always has been."

"Oh, how I wish she might be first and remain first!" ejaculated Frances with fervor.

"What? you have n't changed your mind, then?"

"What has happened to change my mind?"

Frances rose, and her aunt was impressed with the difference in her walk and mien as she again approached the table where stood the arbutus. Her hand hovered lovingly over the delicate, hardy wild things.

"I want some of these, Aunt Mira."

"Take them all. They 're all yours."

"I want some to press. Did you ever press wild flowers, Aunt Mira? Were you ever a sentimental girl?"

"I don't know as I was. I know I never kept folks guessing the way you do. I spoke out just what was in my mind. I should say a girl who could resist all the pictures in that letter was about as unsentimental as they come."

Frances smiled at the pink blossoms she held, and went out of the room.

Two weeks after the reception of Laura Jewett's letter there came one from Sir William Hereford, and Frances did not ask Miss Graves to look over her shoulder while she read it.

It ran thus: —

My Princess, — I declined to take your last word at Waterview, as you know; and you, like an angel, have never since written one discouraging word, and still — I read every one of your letters over again last night, and you have not said one more encouraging than those with which from the first you gently drew me out of darkness into light.

Has any change in my favor been going on in your mind? Has that ring — which I hope in any case you will wear always for my sake — come to mean any more to you than it did on the evening when you so reluctantly allowed me to place it on your finger? I pleaded my cause that night with a great deal of egotism. I was a creature of one idea. You, wise and dear guiding star of my life, were half frightened for me and by me. I realize that now. Also, I think I see in your good letters that you have not swerved from the position you took then.

Miss Jewett, as you know, is here. I long to have you see her again since she has grown to understand. Mr. Deane, my tutor, is a fine fellow. He read me the other day a very picturesque poem. He says it is very old, and I should think it is just about as old as mortal mind; but some lines in it can be turned to mean a great deal to us. They are these: —

> "The Sovereign Alchemist that in a trice
> Life's leaden metal into gold transmutes."

That is what happened to me, and that is what has happened to Miss Laura, and so we have a great deal to talk about. She has the right look in her bright eyes now; and although she is just as amusing as ever, she can be as seriously sweet as you are, my princess. I want you to see her again.

I told you I should come for you in the spring, and you said I might if Divine Love had led you to me. What is the truth about it? I do not want

pity or sacrifice, and you would not give them to me if I did. Dear Princess, best friend that ever a man had, the time has come for you to give me a definite answer, and you can do so fearlessly at last. Do not keep me in suspense. Cable me one word, "Yes" or "No."

Frances lifted radiant eyes from the finished letter.

"Dear Billy! he has felt the truth. He *wants* me to say 'No!'"

With a rejoicing heart she put on her hat and jacket, and went out to renounce all claim to shine in the portrait gallery at Ardleigh.

CHAPTER XXVIII

BY CABLE

It was at this time that her niece's absent-mindedness began to afflict Miss Graves.

"You ought to be treated for it," said Miss Miranda one day. "You behave as if you were in love, Frances Rogers."

"Excuse me. Have you been speaking to me, Aunt Mira? I was just calculating the days, thinking that I shall probably find another letter from Laura Jewett when I get home from school this afternoon."

"Well, your thoughts seem to have been so satisfactory the last week, it 's a pity you have n't talked more of them out. Every time I 've looked at you you 've seemed just bubbling over with something most too good to keep. My talk 's been like one end of a telephone conversation long enough. I 'm getting tired of it."

"Well, I will tell you," replied Frances. "About ten days ago I received a letter from Sir William that I did n't show you. In it he asked me again, and finally, whether I would marry him, and asked me to cable a definite reply."

"I want to know!" Miss Graves stood at close attention.

"I did so. I cabled 'No!'" Frances's dimple played hide and seek as she viewed her aunt's countenance.

"Proud of it, are you?" returned Miss Graves accusingly. "You were n't so hard-hearted the night before he left Waterview."

"No, for then he had n't learned that he wanted me to refuse him. Oh, Aunt Mira, I 've felt as light as a feather ever since that letter came! Is n't it refreshing when duty and inclination jump the same way?"

"What makes you so sure he 's changed?"

Frances laughed softly. "Well, I *am* sure. I expect to have a proof to show you before long. You be guessing what it is while I 'm at school."

In vain Miss Graves guessed rather dismally all the afternoon. Of course, she did not wish to part with Frances; but she had schooled her thought to it, and it would have been a grand as well as a good match. She was not altogether pleased that her niece had taken such an irrevocable step.

At the accustomed time she heard Frances's light tread on the stair. The girl's eyes and cheeks were bright as she rushed into the room.

"Here it is!" she cried, waving an open letter. "I stopped downstairs to read it. It is as sweet as it is short."

Miss Graves adjusted her glasses and took the offered sheet.

DARLING, *darling* PRINCESS, — Thank you *so*

much for not loving him! I 'm too happy to write now.

LAURA.

P. S. — He won't let me call him Billy. Is that ground for jealousy? L.

"Did n't I say everything would come right when the arbutus bloomed?" asked Frances, as Miss Graves looked up blankly.

Her aunt sat down to glance again over the few lines.

"Well, Frances Rogers!" At last she looked up. "I 've known for a long time that you did n't have common sense. Bear the heat and burden of the day with that — that enigma, and then as soon as he becomes normal and somebody to be proud of, hand him over to that girl who never did a thing to deserve it! I 'm glad you like this flat and half a dozen feet of back porch better than a palace and a park."

"Why, I did n't know you wanted to get rid of me," said Frances, trying to look injured, and unable to do anything but ripple into little bursts of laughter.

"Oh, giggle, do!" exclaimed Miss Graves.

"Ha! ha!" laughed the girl, with an infectious merriment that would not be gainsaid.

Miss Miranda smiled reluctantly. "I don't understand you, Frances," she declared, rising. "I suppose I never shall."

"Yes, you will, dear," replied the girl, growing serious. "The moment when I read that letter

was only second in happiness to one other that I shall tell you of some day when I am at liberty to do so."

"Well, she 's smart, Laura Jewett is. I always said so," remarked Miss Miranda, going to the kitchen.

"I 'll be out in time to set the table, Aunt Mira," said Frances, and then she went into her own room and closed the door softly behind her.

"The time has come," she whispered.

With glad eyes and lips she took a heavy book from her table, and opening it, there fell out some pressed sprays of arbutus. These she folded in a blank sheet of paper and slipped it into an envelope, which she sealed and addressed to Maurice Burling. Hastening out and running downstairs, she mailed the wordless message, and was back again before her aunt had remarked her absence.

On the first Saturday after this Frances lured Miss Miranda into Boston on a shopping expedition, having convinced Miss Graves that it was time for them to see about their summer wardrobes. Again she heightened her reputation for eccentricity by purchasing all her cotton gowns for the season of one color. They were all pink, or pink and white.

"What are you thinking of, Frances?" said Miss Miranda desperately, when the fourth dress had been purchased. "You 've always worn blue before, and it 's your best color. Is it possible that just because that poor boy last summer liked blue so much, you won't wear it this year? You 're

just queer enough for that; but let me tell you you 're biting off your own nose. Do you realize you won't have a single blue dress? Yours are just worn out."

"'Sh!" said Frances, in smiling embarrassment. "The clerks are n't interested. I 'm out of my teens now — I must wear pink while I can. I can wear blue when I 'm quite old, can't I?"

"I thought you were n't ever going to be quite old," remarked Miss Miranda dryly.

"Of course — yes; but I can't. I want to wear pink and white this summer. I might have on a blue dress when I — yes, when I did n't — did n't like to, you know."

Miss Miranda sniffed. "I 'd forgotten girls were quite so silly," she said. "Now I want to look for some black grenadine, and don't you get side-tracked on pink cheesecloth if you can help it."

Summer vacation at last. No answer had come to Frances's mute message. Doubtless it had followed Burling about if he were traveling; still she teased herself with a crowd of uncomfortable surmises, not the least uncomfortable being that it might have been lost in the mail or the blossoms so defaced that by the time he saw them they would convey no idea.

The friends who had asked her to Intervale the season before invited her once more. The invitation included Miss Graves, but that lady demurred.

"I should be a cat in a strange garret. I don't know them. You go right along, Frances."

"I refuse to leave you alone here," was the firm reply.

"Then I 'll have Lucy Smith come up. She 'll be tickled. She can go down and make up her roomers' beds every morning, and we 'll have a fine time. I can get a splendid draught through this flat nights, and daytimes we 'll go on excursions."

Upon this cheerful representation Frances packed her trunk and departed for the mountains; and thus it was that one rainy day when Miss Graves could not go forth, a blow fell upon her.

She and Mrs. Smith, in white dressing-sacks and petticoats, were sitting near a dripping window, mending and talking in a state of high spirits which the heated humidity could not dampen, when a messenger boy knocked, and through the partially opened door a cable message addressed to Frances was slipped into Miss Graves's hand.

She tore it open, expecting more of what she termed Laura Jewett's gush.

One word met her at first amazed, then horrified vision: —

"Coming."

For a minute she gazed paralyzed at the unsigned threat, then threw up her hands.

"Lucy Smith!" she cried desperately, "he 's coming!"

"Who?"

"The lord!"

"*Who*, Miranda Graves!"

"Oh, it 's a long story," groaned Miss Miranda, "but I knew she was too confident. There 's been an English nobleman wanting to marry Frances for a year," went on Miss Graves, not unmindful, even in her extremity, of the splendor of this announcement and the good excuse for making it. "She did n't care for him, and she does n't, though he 's been writing all winter. He is n't like most titles. He has good habits and he 's rich — you ought to see the pictures of his castle and everything; but Frances has got the real Rogers obstinacy, and she 's taken against the idea, and she thought she 'd settled it for good and all." She gazed at the paper again. "I guess I can send Frances Rogers a telegram as short and sharp as this one. Mine 'll just say, '*Going*.' That young fellow 's a regular Samson. He 's a raving beauty, but he 's got the temper of Cain. Do you suppose I 'm going to meekly stay here and let him come and pull this flat down around my ears because Frances is gone? She won't have him, even if he massacres us all, and so I can tell him. What am I going to do, Lucy Smith?"

Mrs. Smith, whose gray hair was slowly rising under this amazing mingling of magnificence and terror, glanced fearfully toward the door and spoke falteringly: —

"Let 's go down to my house, Miranda."

"Pshaw! He can't get here for six days, Lucy. Don't look so scared. I 'm going to make Frances come home — that 's what I 'll do; and I 'll have in a policeman, too. You see if I don't."

"Is he so desperate?" inquired Mrs. Smith in a quavering voice.

"Distracted about her. Clean distracted. I never meant to tell you a word, Lucy, because what was the use; and don't you breathe it."

Mrs. Smith looked incapable of breathing anything as she sat looking up at Miss Miranda towering darkly above her.

"I 'll write this instant, Lucy Smith. Just excuse me."

The reply to Miss Graves's wild and imperious appeal came promptly, and read as follows: —

"That message was from Mr. Burling. Please send him up here when he comes."

The surprise of this disclosure was scarcely an anti-climax.

"It 's the young man's uncle," Miss Graves explained to her guest, "and I 'm just as much afraid of him another way. He 's evidently coming to plead for his nephew, and I do feel for Frances, I must say. Poor, poor girl! Mr. Burling is used to being obeyed, I can tell you. If he don't get what he 's coming for, I guess it 'll be a first failure. Poor Frances! I don't know but I 'm glad she 's going to fight it out up there."

Miss Graves concocted what she deemed a clever device to avoid seeing the Englishman. On the sixth morning after receiving the cable message, she posted up outside the locked door of the flat a letter sealed and addressed to Mr. Burling, explaining that she had been called away on that special day, and that he would find Miss Rogers's

address inclosed. Then she went to Mrs. Smith's and remained until late in the evening. On the third day the device worked. When she returned, the letter was gone.

"Now," she thought, with a deep sigh, "poor Frances will have to deal with him."

Among the hills Maurice found her. He had never before been in this picturesque region, and never had its charms fallen upon eyes which received them more as a matter of course. As he drove from the station to the house he sought, lofty hills and undulating vale but meant to him the setting for one figure. Of course the turf was fresh with a springlike green. She had trodden it. Of course the air was pure. She had breathed it. The mountains stood in her presence.

The house where Frances was staying was set back on a gentle slope. A clump of tall trees rose on the lawn, and as Burling alighted from his carriage he caught the gleam of a rosy gown amid the sturdy trunks.

Frances was sitting beside a tea-table with a group of ladies, one of whom was quicker than she to discover the stranger advancing across the lawn.

"Who is the elegant creature?" she asked softly, but with vivid interest, as Maurice came toward them.

"It is Mr. Burling," said Frances, moving to meet him.

Rose and white she was as their hands clasped. She introduced him to the others of the group.

"You choose a rather unusual season to cross to America," said Mrs. Deering, Frances's hostess.

"Yes, I came on business," he replied. "The men with whom I am interested were obliged to come now."

"What a charming manner and voice!" thought Mrs. Deering. Then she recollected that there had also been something out of the ordinary in Frances's manner and voice when the girl had announced to her hostess that this Englishman was imminent; so after she had given him a cup of tea and there had been a little general conversation, the hostess came to the rescue.

"I was just about to take these young ladies to see my roses," she remarked. "Frances knows them by heart. We shall hope to meet you again at supper, Mr. Burling;" and Mrs. Deering led her reluctant flock away.

Left alone, these two patient waiters looked at each other in silence.

They were in an outdoor world which seemed to Burling to consist of eyes. He joined Frances on a rustic seat.

"The message was like you," he said. "It reached me on the day I cabled. They were rather travel-worn little flowers when I saw them." He opened a locket on his fob and showed the faint blossoms beneath the glass.

"This trip had just been decided upon. That is why I did not come alone."

Her eyes spoke to him without need of words.

"When did it begin with you, darling? When you read my letter?"

"Long, long before."

"How wonderful!" he said in an awed voice.

"How natural," she responded.

Silence.

"I am on my way to Wyoming. How would you like to spend a year in Wyoming, Frances?"

Her smile and dimple were exquisitely eloquent of her indifference as to where that year was spent.

"Oh, don't look that way, dear," he pleaded, "until we can get somewhere alone!"

"I wish we were in Wyoming now," she said.

"So do I. The ranch is very wide. Lord Lenox and Sir Edmund Fairfax, the principal owners, came over with me. They want me to take charge of things out there for a year. I had written them that I would do so when I learned of Billy's engagement, and came home full of dreams. There the arbutus found me, for tired of travel, it had come back to Ardleigh. Then I told my friends that I should have to postpone my decision until I learned the tastes of a lady in America."

"Oh, did you tell them about it?"

"Tell them! I told the dolphins and the stars. It 's a wonder I did n't tell the deck steward. Lenox says I leaked ecstasy disgustingly all the way over. He wants to see you; so does Fairfax."

"I don't want to see them." A little cringe. "I 'm afraid of Lords and Sirs."

"Only for their sakes, I should think."

"It seems such a pity that anybody should know before Aunt Mira."

"Oh, yes!" gently. "Aunt Mira. She posted up a letter for me on her coldly closed door."

Frances smiled. "I'm glad if there was anything cold in Melrose. Poor Aunt Mira! She was afraid to see you, I know."

"Why, pray? She always had me in excellent subjection."

"I think she thought — she feared — that you had come on account of — of Billy."

Burling looked into his beloved's eyes until hers dropped. "He never had a chance, then — the lad?"

She shook her head slightly.

"You belong to me, Frances!" A pause. "How good you were to wear this gown — my arbutus flower!"

"You belong to me, Maurice. I shall always wear what you like."

More silence; adequately eloquent, fully satisfactory to the silent ones.

Burling was first to speak.

"And I know what you are thinking, my darling, — that we both belong to Another.

"Ah!" with a glance over his shoulder, "there is somebody coming this way. Really, Frances, you know, there are limits. Can't you take me to walk somewhere?"

"Do you like ferns?" asked the girl demurely.

"I adore ferns — when they know enough to

grow in some dark and secluded dell far from the madding summer cottager."

They rose and strolled back past the house and down a decline which led toward a thick growth of firs.

"See all those Christmas trees," said Frances. "Don't you like the odor of them? There was plenty of arbutus here in the spring."

"There is plenty now," answered Burling, looking down into her softly beaming eyes.

Their hands met and clasped, and they passed within the wood.

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